



**Inland Norway
University**

Faculty of Education and Natural Sciences

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Master's Thesis

**Literatur's Role in Intercultural Competence
Acquisition**

Lektorutdanning i engelsk

2021

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Jennifer Jønnum Brunelle, my supervisor, for helping me complete this thesis. Without her constructive and supportive feedback, this project would not have been possible. Jennifer's knowledge of intercultural literature and post-colonial issues helped me get through writing the most difficult sections of this thesis. My original supervisor Marit Elise Lyngstad should also be mentioned for her essential guidance in the early stages of writing.

I would also like to thank my fiancée Mathilde Tysse Karlsen for supporting me through the writing period and helping with revising the project. Finally, I want to thank the participants of the interviews who made this project feasible.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to evaluate the effects of reading literature and how reading literature can develop intercultural competence. The thesis uses a qualitative narrative analysis of third-year university students who have completed an intercultural literature course (2ENL512-4) at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. The thesis utilizes a sociological cultural approach when discussing culture and analyzing culture, based on Per Morten Schiefloe's concepts from his book *Mennesker og Samfunn: Innføring i Sosiologisk Forståelse* (2011). The evaluation and discussion of intercultural competence is drawn upon by that which is defined by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and the work of Michael Byram in his book *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (1997). These two approaches make up the majority of the theoretical framework for the thesis.

The project is heavily inspired by the study discussed by Carola Hecke in the book *Children's literature in second language education* (2013). The method section for the thesis is based on Dennis Howitt's book *Introduction to qualitative research methods in psychology* (2016). The discussion part of the thesis seeks to uncover the broader implication of the findings in light of the theoretical framework, past research, and what that means for the Norwegian classroom and society at large. Moreover, the discussion seeks to evaluate the potential benefits and obstacles of the current teaching of culture in the classroom concerning intercultural literature.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, literature and culture, mindsets and attitudes, cultural knowledge, skills and communication, narrative interview and analysis

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1. Introduction

1.1 Culture and mindsets

Culture plays a significant role in influencing our socialization, to the point where our culture is woven into our mindsets. This cultural influence affects our mindsets, and in turn, how we view the world around us. As a result, it is not uncommon for us to be unaware of how certain aspects of how we think, are the product of our cultural influence. The ways we communicate are also influenced by our culture, and different cultures tend to have different preferences in communication styles. In some cultures, expressing oneself in a straightforward manner is viewed as the preferred communication style. In contrast, other cultures view a direct manner of communication as impolite, and a more indirect form of expression is preferred. In interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds, differences in mindsets and styles of communication become apparent. In order to communicate effectively with people of different cultural backgrounds, we need to recognize our own as well as other cultures' preferences for particular cultural expressions, practices, perspectives, and knowledge. This recognition and understanding of our own and 'other' cultures play a central role in creating intercultural competence and is referred to as critical cultural awareness (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2019, p. 158-159).

Without intercultural competence and cultural awareness, there is an increased risk of miscommunication, cultural offenses, and complete communication breakdown. In today's globalized world, where intercultural encounters are more common, the need for intercultural competence is essential for effective communication and building relations.

Intercultural competence is dependent on certain attitudes, skills, and knowledge. An essential aspect of successful intercultural communication and competence is how we view, think and approach the 'other' culture when communicating. Without tolerance, open-mindedness, empathy skills, and underlying knowledge of the 'other' culture, intercultural competence is impossible (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2019, p. 162-164). With the essential components of intercultural competence in mind, how can we facilitate the development of intercultural competence? This is a question that has been discussed in academia to a great extent, where numerous approaches for fostering intercultural competence have been proposed (Reichl,

2013, p. 108). These suggestions include everything from traditional classroom teaching to intercultural encounters outside the classroom (Byram, 1997). In the last couple of decades, however, a lot of attention has been given to literature's potential for facilitating intercultural competence (Hecke, 2011, p. 653).

1.2 Research questions:

How does a reader's pre-conceived notion of 'otherness' change after reading intercultural literature?

In what manner does reading literature contribute to better intercultural competence in the reader?

1.3 Literature and intercultural competence

Literature is not only a source of great entertainment but also a tool that provides a vast spectrum of insight into people's identities and experiences compared, especially when compared to other forms of media such as film (Carlsen, 2019, p. 120-121). The difference here lies in how each medium uses medium-specific techniques to tell their stories. In short, films can be described as portraying a story through audio-visual techniques, whereas literature tells its story through conceptual language. For example, films present the viewers with an objective perspective of a scene through the camera lens. Books, on the other hand, provide a subjective perspective through the use of language that allows us to enter into a character's mind, see, feel, and live through their experiences (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013, p. 23-27). This personal insight is a feature, unfortunately, lacking in other forms of media.

Moreover, this objectivity and subjectivity also apply to how we experience these types of media. In films, everyone sees the same scene in the same way due to how the camera serves as an objective mediator. In contrast, books are always more subjective due to how language is used and interpreted, resulting in a unique experience for each subsequent reader (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013, p. 29-36). In this way, reading literature allows us to live in other people's

skin and truly see the world from their perspective, unlike film, or as it was so elegantly put by the author George R. R. Martin; “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one.” (Martin, 2011, p. 495). Literature can allow us to cross the outer barriers of our identity and experience other cultural identities and gender expressions. The insight into the subjective experience that literature offers is therefore closely linked to developing intercultural competence. When reading literature, we experience other cultures through a character’s cultural identity (Carlsen, 2019, p. 120-121). Books such as *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006) and *The Absolute true diary of a part-time Indian* (Alexie & Forney, 2007) give a unique insight into cultures that are rarely represented in the mainstream media. These books are fascinating in terms of intercultural learning because they are written by authors from the respective cultures depicted in the literary work, thereby giving the reader an insider’s view of this unique culture. Reading this type of literature means that we as readers have to step outside of our usual viewpoint. The term decentering is used for the ability to step out of our own cultural background (Carlsen, 2019, p. 121). Consequently, literature may be a potent tool for tackling ethnocentric views such as nationalism and racism.

Not only does literature have the profound ability to establish a subjective perspective into other contemporary cultures, but it can also give readers a view into the past. The temporal intercultural perspective allows readers to look into their cultural history and see their own culture as dynamic and evolving. For instance, reading the old Norse sagas (1100-1400) allow us to get a retrospective look into the Scandinavian medieval culture. A crucial cultural difference to be discovered when reading the sagas, is how tolerated and often encouraged violence was in Scandinavia during the middle ages. Many of the stories told in the sagas are about violent blood feuds and young men killing and fighting to maintain or increase their honor. Such an acceptance of violence is strongly discouraged and frowned upon in the present-day Scandinavian culture. In this regard, we can observe how unfamiliar our own culture becomes as we rewind the clock. Reading the old sagas enables us to perceive our own culture in a more analytical manner and further increases our awareness and knowledge about the culture we experience and contribute to today. Attitudes and values are not the only foreign aspect of culture that readers come across. Linguistic differences are usually the first thing one is faced with when reading old works of literature. When flicking through the pages of Shakespeare (1564-1616), the early modern style of English can often be perceived as a barrier when reading the literary work and serve as a constant reminder of how the English language has evolved in the last four hundred years. This difference in language has a darker

side to it as well. A typical aspect of culture that has changed immensely, and readers regularly happen upon is how language and its connotations were used regarding attitudes towards people of color (POC) and how this is expressed in older literary works.

A good example of this is the racist and problematic language expressed in the literary works of H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937) that are deemed unacceptable by today's standards. The language used in some of his works reflects, quite frankly, crude and discriminating ideas of white supremacy, which the author, unfortunately, held himself. Our confrontation with these unsettling ideas leads us to question what sort of value one should place upon this form of older problematic literature. Aside from having an important literary-cultural legacy, such works offer us a chance to deconstruct white supremacist framed narratives. In *Call of Cthulhu* by HP Lovecraft (1928/2011), POC are presented as savages and sub-humans. Such a POC representation is uncomfortable for modern readers and confronts us with the West's racist past, which we often wish to forget. By deconstructing these racist narratives, we can gain a higher cultural awareness that we can use to tackle similar issues of the present day. For instance, we can draw parallels from Lovecraft's racist ideology of the early Nineteen hundreds to the racism and discrimination ever-present in the world today. Furthermore, we can study the link between stereotypical representations in past media and literature and how they have impacted how we view POCs today.

1.4 Literature and intercultural competence in the English curriculum:

Culture and its role in influencing our worldview are also reflected in the overarching theme democracy and citizenship from the revised curriculum. In addition, this section of the revised curriculum aims for the students to learn multiple ways of communicating and interpreting the world (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). These curricular statements put an increased emphasis on developing students' intercultural competence. Literature is, therefore, an excellent medium for helping the students in broadening their cultural horizons. Literature is also indirectly mentioned through the competence aim; "read, analyze and interpret fiction in the English language" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Therefore, reading literature is compulsory in Norwegian schools, and teachers should do a thorough evaluation of the books they wish to implement. Finally, intercultural competence is directly mentioned in the core

elements section concerning English texts. In the section titled “Working with texts in English,” the curriculum states, “Language learning takes place in the encounter with texts in English [...] By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus, the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns.” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). The reason literature is not explicitly mentioned here is that the section states that English texts have numerous shapes and forms that are not just the traditional text-based literary construction. The curriculum states, “The texts can contain writing, pictures, audio, drawings, graphs, numbers and other forms of expression that are combined to enhance and present a message.” The curriculum thus opens for the use of graphic novels, audiobooks, and interactive novels in the classroom in addition to traditional texts. With this in mind, the teacher has numerous resources at their disposal for teaching and learning about other cultures and people.

2. Theoretical framework and past research

This thesis draws upon multiple sources to form the theory section. To study how literature affects intercultural competence, we need to understand what intercultural competence and culture are and their various components. Understanding these concepts allows us to analyze and discuss how someone has achieved intercultural competence and the degree of competence. Additionally, it is essential to comprehend how communication works through different communication models and how culture influences communication. Utilizing communication models allows us to understand how someone has achieved successful or unsuccessful communication and what aspect of their communicative approach went wrong. Since this project aims to uncover literature's influence on intercultural competence, we also need to review past research on the topic as a whole. How 'other' cultures are portrayed in literature and other media must also be understood since these affect our overall knowledge and attitude. Finally, since the project focuses on acquiring intercultural communication through an educational setting, it is essential to look at how culture has been taught in the classroom and how this has affected our view of 'other' cultures. Before delving into the theoretical framework and past research that this thesis draws on, it is important to clarify specific key terms.

First off, 'otherness' refers to the idea of the other, something, or someone who stands outside oneself. In the context of this thesis, otherness refers to ethnic-cultural otherness. Ethnic-cultural otherness can be defined as the concept of ethnicities and cultures that are different from our own. In light of western cultural hegemony, 'otherness' refers to those of marginalized communities.

Secondly, it is crucial to understand what intercultural competence is. Intercultural competence is simply put, the ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds than our own. However, Michael Byram, a central figure in intercultural teaching, distinguishes between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. In intercultural competence, the individual expresses themselves in their own language, drawing upon their knowledge skills and attitudes. Whereas in intercultural communicative competence, the individual utilizes a foreign language when communicating with other cultures. What separates the two terms is, in other words, the foreign language component (Byram, 1997, p. 71). When discussing intercultural competence in this thesis, the

distinction between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is not as explicit as it is with Byram.

A good example of this is how intercultural competence is mentioned and discussed in the English subject curriculum in the core elements section. As mentioned in the introduction, how the curriculum discusses using texts for learning language and culture to develop intercultural competence essentially discusses the development of ICC as Byram would define it. The curriculum refers to ICC because English, a foreign or second language, is the medium for intercultural competence to occur. Due to how the curriculum stands in relation to Byram's definitions, the thesis will have a less rigorous distinction between Intercultural competence and ICC. Byram's rigid distinction has become less prominent over the years in the discourse of intercultural communication and competence; thus, the thesis will not comply that firmly with his specific terminology. Having a looser distinction between the terms is therefore preferable, primarily since the thesis is written in the context of the Norwegian educational system that does not distinguish between intercultural competence and ICC. With this in mind, we must then ask ourselves what definition of culture we are using when discussing intercultural competence.

2.1 Definitions and aspects of culture

Culture is a term that can be understood and defined in a multitude of ways. Most commonly, we categorize culture as something we have or that something we do. From this first perspective, culture is defined as an object or activity that exhibits a cultural value (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 127-128). This qualitative understanding of culture generally separates between higher and lower forms of culture. High culture is defined as the canonized works of art that academic and societal institutions have deemed worthy of high cultural status. Low culture, on the other hand, is the mass culture created for mass consumption (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 45-46). An example of high culture would be opera and classical music, which cultural elites have deemed to be the epitome of western culture due to its long history and cultural heritage. Thus, there is something to be said about social class and how the higher social classes shape the perspective or narrative of what can be deemed high culture (Storey, 2003, p. 74-75). Low culture could be popular music such as the ones found on top 40 modern country playlists,

which is notorious for having a large discrepancy between its general popularity and the critics' disregard of the music genre (Dube, 2016).

From the second perspective, culture is defined as an ordinary and daily human activity. This understanding of culture is often referred to as a descriptive understanding of culture. Here culture is not seen as an individual phenomenon but as interconnected events in the societal structure. Due to the hierarchical connection between society and culture, we can study culture at different levels, such as global, national, or local. The social anthropologist Arne Martin Klausen (1992) in Schiefloe (2011) defines culture as, "The ideas, values, rules, norms, codes, and symbols that people inherit from one generation and carries over to the next often changing along the way" (Klausen 1992; Schiefloe, 2011, p. 128). This definition is most commonly used and taught in our educational institutions and is the definition this thesis will rely on the most. However, this thesis aims to explore intercultural competence, not define a broad and encompassing definition of culture.

The descriptive definition of culture is expansive and consists of multiple complicated social structures. Attempting to identify them all and how they are related to each other is nearly impossible. However, we can identify and explore some vital elements of culture, which will ultimately benefit our understanding of intercultural competence as a whole. According to Schiefloe (2011), culture can be divided into four core categories: language, knowledge, belief & values, and norms & sanctions. All cultures and societies have a language system that their inhabitants acquire through socialization. From a sociological perspective, language can be understood as a collection of symbols utilized for messaging in most communication processes. Language is, therefore, a precondition for any expanded communication and essential for establishing social relations. Schiefloe (2011) stated that a shared language is a prerequisite for any culture since elements of culture such as shared social norms cannot be adequately conveyed without it. As a result, people who are not adept at using a language within a society, like second-language speakers, have their opportunities and societal membership put under pressure by the cultural majority. These individuals will experience a general disadvantage in socio-economic relations, such as their ability to access jobs (Schiefloe, 2011, p. 135-137). Society's focus on language proficiency can result in stigmatization and discrimination like the affirmation of stereotypes and racism. Finally, it is essential to note how language itself is not an objective tool that simply exists to define and give meaning to the world around us. Language is the tool used to cement society and individuals' narrative of it. In other words, language is how we affirm our identities through

our cultural surroundings (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 138-139). Generally, this entails defining perimeters of cultural membership and limiting access or integration to said culture if specific criteria of cultural membership are not met. Criteria for cultural membership are determined through a culture's knowledge, beliefs, and values. It also entails defining the ideas of the 'other' culture and how they are different (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 159-162).

Knowledge, beliefs, and values are projected ideas that maintain the imagined communities (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 303) of the societal structure. These projected ideas are based on shared ideas of what is right or wrong information and behavior. These ideas are often not explicit but are presumed to be known throughout society at large. The knowledge, beliefs, and values of the culture determine preferences within social structures and institutions like family, religion, and governing systems. Furthermore, cultural knowledge guides its societal member regarding existential ideas about humanity's place and origin. This cultural knowledge can be found in the form of religion and philosophy. It is important to note that the social imagery within the culture is not necessarily scientifically or logically anchored. Interest conflicts based on differences of values and beliefs are quite common at different levels within society. Conflicts arise when members of a community deviate from these cultural ideals because society expects its members to abide by these narrative truths. An attack on these ideas is thus seen as an attack on the cultural foundation of the societal structure (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 139-143). Knowledge, beliefs, and values apply to what a culture believes about itself and its beliefs about other cultures. In some instances, we can see cultures impose and enforce their knowledge, beliefs, and values onto other cultures. This phenomenon is known as epistemological violence (Teo, 2010, p. 295-303).

Values that are situationally determined are referred to as attitudes. Attitudes are primarily shaped by our primary and secondary socialization and function as a framework for avoiding social inaptness. Schieffloe (2011) states that attitudes consist of three separate components. The cognitive component relates to the individual's worldview. The affective component is centered on the individual's feelings. This component can be further divided into three different dimensions. The first one being the affective direction, which could be either positive or negative. The second dimension being the affective interest, which determines the affective intensity. The third dimension relates to the affective interest of the individual, in other words, how important they think the subject is. The final attitude component is the behavioral element which relates to the relation between action and viewpoint. This component concerns itself with how viewpoints affect the actions of the actor within a social field (Schieffloe, 2011, p.

139-144). An example of all these components coming into play would be an individual's attitudes towards another culture. The cognitive component is the individual's worldview of their own culture in comparison with other cultures. The affective component would thereby be the individual's positive or negative opinions about that specific culture. Finally, the behavioral would be the individual's action regarding the other culture. Individuals who negatively view the 'other' culture would react cautiously or critically in an eventual intercultural encounter. For instance, if the individual has an ethnocentric worldview, these negative reactions could be seen in stereotyping and discrimination. On the other hand, if the individual had a more relativistic viewpoint, the interaction would be less affected by attitudes of suspicion or judgment. Hence, the actor's action would result in a more open-minded interaction, resulting in a more successful intercultural exchange (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 144).

Norms and sanctions are part of the reasons why human behavior follows certain predictable rules of interaction. When the individual interacts with the social structure, they generally act in accordance with societal norms. Norms are the governed and ungoverned rules about how to behave within a given society, while sanctions are the consequences of not maintaining said rules. Simply put, norms are the cultural laws that underpin our society. It is important to note that norms are not an observable phenomenon on an individual level but rather something maintained through collective action on a larger scale. Norms thereby serve as behavioral guides for the individual since their actions have consequences. The consequences or sanctions of not following a social norm would depend on the severity of the deviation. These sanctions are culturally dependent, which means that different norm violations carry various sanctions across different cultures. As stated earlier, it is common to distinguish between governed and ungoverned norms. The same also applies to sanctions. A governed norm could be found in the form of societal law. A sanction for breaking said norm would be judicial punishment, generally through fines or incarceration depending on the severity of the law violation. On the other hand, violation of ungoverned norms results in different forms of ostracism (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 144-152).

Norms are classified into different levels of officiality, where the lowest levels are ungoverned norms while the highest are governed norms. The lowest level of norms is referred to as conventions. Conventions define acceptable or unacceptable behavior and have the least social significance. A convention could be aesthetical preferences like fashion or music taste. It could also be personal characteristics that are not socially preferred but accepted, like shyness or general awkwardness. The second level of norms is called customs. Customs have generally

accepted rules of social engagement. Customs define what is considered polite or impolite within the societal culture and how they are situationally dependent. Examples of customs would be using correct pronouns, table manners, and different forms of greetings. The highest level of norms is injunctions and prohibition. These are norms that are absolute, which means that breaking them has serious repercussions. Norms like these are bound by the court of law, which means the norm violation results in judicial punishment (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 144-151). Norms and sanctions are very culturally dependent, meaning that some norm deviations are punishable in the court of law in some societies. Whereas in other cultures, the norm violation is not a punishable offense. In some societies, the norm violation is not even considered a deviation at all (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 152).

Though the aspects of culture that Schiefloe defines (2011) are helpful in analyzing cultural phenomena, it is essential to know that cultures are not stable and all-encompassing categories. The idea that cultures are stable concepts is something Susanne Reichl (2013) is particularly critical of, especially when teaching about culture in the classroom. She suggests that cultures should be taught as a network of different relations that is less rooted in territorial or ethnic boundaries. Cultures are dynamic and not stable monoliths of ideas related to knowledge, values, and norms. At the center of the cultural networks is the individual identity that engages within the cultural framework. Identity is also dynamic and constantly developing throughout the individual's life (Reichl, 2013, p. 107-108).

Nevertheless, the aspects and components of culture that Schiefloe (2011) describes will be crucial to the discussion in the thesis. Aspects of culture simply have to be viewed through the lens of dynamic and individual participation. These aspects of cultural theory and sociology are central to the analysis of the thesis since it concerns itself with how the participants' cultural perspectives changed as a result of reading literature.

2.2 Communication models

Communication is the exchange of information between people and is essential to maintaining and establishing cultures. The act of communication is an interactive process that necessitates specific communicative skills and abilities to achieve successful results. Communication is a heavily theorized subject, and various models attempt to explain the inner workings of

communicative interaction. In light of intercultural communication and competence, one can utilize communication models to better analyze and understand the intricacies of intercultural communication transactions. Such models can thus be beneficial when studying successful or unsuccessful intercultural communication incidents. In Shannon and Weaver's (1949) communication model in Schiefloe (2011) the sender encodes a language-based message transmitted and decoded by the receiver. Language and other cultural elements like norms and values are central in the encoding and decoding of the message. This model also includes non-verbal communication like facial and bodily expressions (Shannon & Weaver, 1949 in; Schiefloe, 2011, p. 302-303).

In the model, communication is assessed in messages and how they are sent through a transmission channel. When the message does not arrive in its intended form, it is the result of communication disturbances. These disturbances are the result of insufficient coding or decoding. Alternatively, they can be the result of other factors outside of the communicative exchange. These disturbances include but are not limited to incompatible language differences and audio or visual impairment. The Shannon-Weaver model (1949) describes linear communication because it refers to information traveling in one direction. The model generally describes impersonal or formal communication like public broadcasts. However, personal communication between people is influenced by additional factors than those seen in the linear communication model (Shannon & Weaver, 1949 in; Schiefloe, 2011, p. 303-304).

The interactive communication model emphasizes the importance of feedback in any communicative interaction. Feedback is what the sender of the message is constantly experiencing from the receiver in the form of verbal and non-verbal communication. This model also emphasizes the cooperative aspects of communication, such as the need for the actors involved to share some common ground to anchor their communication. As a result, parties must share a common language and a referential framework concerning how they code and decode. This referential framework is largely culturally founded, which means cultures that are more different from one another have more considerable difficulties with the actors communicating successfully. The intentional and unintentional meanings of a message are thus given more significant importance in this communication model, since it is essential for how a communicative transaction may result (Schiefloe, 2011, p. 303-304). These unintentional meanings of the communication process could lead to critical incidents in an intercultural exchange which is why the models provide us with tools of analysis when dissecting intercultural communication.

2.3 Byram's intercultural communicative competence model

How Byram describes cultures and their key elements is in many ways similar to the of Schiefloe (2011). Nevertheless, he avoids discussing any characteristics of the differences between cultures which Schiefloe (2011), on the other hand, discusses extensively. Byram also avoids set definitions of culture to avoid adding to the numerous lists of all-encompassing cultural definitions. He instead suggests: "that we need a definition to suit the purposes of the foreign language teacher" (Byram, 1997, p. 39). Byram describes culture as shared meaning within different social groups, thereby creating a link to language instead of other fields of study like sociology. Byram's definition is more pragmatical, in that his definition is aimed explicitly towards his field of study, which is language teaching. His cultural definition is only meant to assist in language teaching with the aim of achieving successful intercultural communication. The same also applies to Byram's model and its components, all working towards the objective of foreign language teaching. Successful intercultural communication requires good ICC. Byram defines good ICC as the ability to communicate with another person from another culture using a foreign language. Here both individuals communicate in a manner that is satisfactory to both parties. They are ultimately able to act as mediators between themselves and other people from different cultures. Byram (1997) stands critical regarding a static viewpoint of culture and emphasizes the importance of what the individual brings and how they interact with culture. It could therefore be said that Byram (1997) operates with a participatory dynamic view of culture.

The ICC model consists of attitudes, knowledge, and skills first described by Michael Byram in his book *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (1997). These fundamental elements of intercultural communication have since been repeated or added upon in many other intercultural competence models like that of Dypedahl (2018). In Byram's model, attitudes, knowledge, and skills are the core factors that influence intercultural communication and the outcome of said communication. Byram (1997) describes attitudes as to how those of different cultural backgrounds are perceived in relation to their beliefs and behavior. He distinguishes between negative and positive attitudes in intercultural communication. Negative attitudes are linked to unsuccessful intercultural communication, while positive attitudes are linked to successful outcomes. The negative attitudes are those fraught with prejudice and stereotypes, while the positive attitudes are those of openness, curiosity, and respect. Byram stresses the importance of decentering in achieving positive and

successful intercultural communication. In more extreme cases of decentering, the individual experiences a form of re-socialization that Berger and Luckmann (1996) refer to as alternation in Byram (1997). Here the individual deconstructs their previous perception of reality and reassembles it in light of new social norms. In this regard, alternation can challenge the previously established norms of primary socialization, which is generally believed to be the most crucial socialization process (Berger & Luckmann, 1996 in; Byram, 1997, p. 34-35). Considering Schiefloe's (2011) perspective on attitude, we can see how affective direction, intensity, and interest can be both enabling and limiting factors regarding the teacher's ability to help the students decenter or alternate. More open-minded students are more willing to change their perspectives in the classroom, while more close-minded students will naturally be more resistant.

Byram (1997) describes knowledge as the background information the individual brings to the intercultural exchange. Furthermore, he categorizes different forms of intercultural knowledge, of which there are two. The first category of knowledge is related to tangible information about a culture, country, and social groups. The second category of knowledge contains slightly more elusive information about the different concepts within the various communication processes. The first category of knowledge is typically acquired through the individuals' socialization process. Primary socialization through parents and relatives engrain knowledge to their children about their own as well as other cultures and societies. Secondary socialization through the formal education system expands and adds to this knowledge. The National curriculum is typically characterized by knowledge retaining to national and international culture. For instance, a large section of the history subject in most countries are dedicated to that country's history and development.

The knowledge of the different concepts within the communication process is also acquired through primary socialization. However, this knowledge typically only extends to one's own cultural background. How particular messages are coded and decoded is thus engrained in us through our primary socialization. Therefore, this second category of knowledge includes information about how culture affects coding and decoding in the communication process. Moreover, it also consists of understanding identity processes (Byram, 1997, p. 35-37). Knowledge retaining to this second category can be critical to intercultural communication since it allows us to see our own biases and preferences when communicating with others. Ideas of 'otherness' are also crucial in dissecting our biases. Utilizing the interactive communication model (Schiefloe, 2011, p. 304), we can see how a particular communication

method is not a deliberate offense but instead the result of cultural coding. With this awareness, we can circumvent critical incidents to a greater extent.

Skills, in this case, relates to the individual's abilities in intercultural interaction. ICC skills are dynamic and require constant development to achieve proficiency. Byram lists the skill of interpretation and the skill of discovery and interaction as the two central skills in intercultural communication. The skill of interpretation is how learners draw upon their pre-existing knowledge to make sense of a text. The ICC component knowledge is a prerequisite for this skill. The skill lies in how the learner draws upon the pre-existing knowledge to interpret texts and interactions. The skill of discovery and interaction is related to how the learner approaches intercultural communication. It is a skill that comes especially into play when the learner has no prior knowledge of intercultural communication. The skill of discovery and interaction is the learner's ability to discover new information and acquire knowledge through interaction. The learner's ability to identify cultural and social phenomena and draw parallels between other cultures is also a part of this skill. In this sense, the skills of discovery can be compared to that of skills of analysis and evaluation. Furthermore, the skill of interaction is closely related to the learner's ability for social interaction in intercultural communication. Here the learner has to account for issues in the communication process, such as different cultural coding (Byram, 1997, p. 37-38).

The three components: attitudes, knowledge, and skills of Byram's ICC model, are then distilled into numerous learning objectives. Any assessment of ICC is based on these learning objectives (Byram, 1997, p. 56-57). Byram distinguishes between three separate environments or locations of learning for the students to partake in their journey towards intercultural competence. He distinguishes between the classroom, fieldwork, and independent learning. According to Byram (1997), the classroom is a good learning facility for intercultural competence where the teacher can monitor the student's progress and acquisition of the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Traditionally, teachers present cultural information through factual information of dominant norms, customs, cultural knowledge, and values when teaching culture in the classroom. Thus, the teachers can avoid misinformation about the given cultures, thereby laying a good foundation for the necessary attitudes and knowledge required in ICC. Existing stereotypes and misinformation might also be brought up and deconstructed in the classroom setting.

One potential issue with teaching intercultural competence in the classroom is that it has traditionally been taught through factual information about the country or culture, where the teacher tends to decontextualize information. This decontextualization results in a false sense of acquisition of ICC. For example, the teacher might present facts about superficial cultural phenomena in the UK like tea-drinking, British etiquette, sarcastic humor, and football fanaticism. Through emphasizing these all-encompassing cultural phenomena, the class is presented with a warped and stereotypical view of the UK. Thus, the teacher undermines the cultural variation and the importance of individual participation within British culture. Generally, these facts are presented through pedagogical or factual texts typically found in coursebooks. These texts generally leave the impression that cultures are overly homogenous.

As a result, this approach undermines minorities because of their lack of representation in the typical factual or pedagogical texts found in coursebooks. Furthermore, the cultural phenomena are not understood within the confounds of said culture, thus not allowing students to understand said phenomena. Byram (1997) stresses the importance of utilizing sociological and cultural anthropological analysis when teaching about culture and cultural phenomena to avoid this decontextualization. Going back to the tea example, the teacher could discuss the roots of this phenomenon and its relation to British colonialism and class implications in the 17th century. The teacher could also draw on comparative cultural analysis by highlighting the UK's consumption of tea to that of the Nordic countries' consumption of coffee (CBI, 2020). In addition, said analysis must be tied with language learning if the lesson is to facilitate ICC for the students (Byram, 1997, p. 65).

Another issue with traditional classroom teaching, is the idea that students learn intercultural competence in the classroom first, only to practice it in real-world encounters later. Byram (1997) points out how students are constantly interacting interculturally through different media. Consequently, the knowledge students received in the classroom always competes with the one received outside of school. Thus, the teacher must not neglect what the students already know about a country or culture when teaching and build on that prior knowledge as a foundation.

Fieldwork is an organized activity that focuses on intercultural exposure to facilitate learning. Typical examples of fieldwork are short intercultural visits and extended intercultural visits. These short visits are typically utilized in a classroom setting where the teacher brings the class on a field trip for a singular day of intercultural encounters. This field trip does not have

to be abroad but can also be a trip to a museum, festival, or location linked with the culture of interest. Examples of domestic intercultural field trips that involve national minorities in Norway could be the teacher bringing the students to a Sami culture and music festival or the Jewish museum in Oslo. After the field trip, the intercultural encounter is then dissected and studied to improve ICC. The extended intercultural visits are generally intercultural residence, most commonly abroad. Here the educational institution organizes a limited stay in another country where the student gets to partake in the other country's educational system.

An example of this would be The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences exchange program for one semester to the UK and Zambia. This form of fieldwork is partly also a classroom setting. The fieldwork here is essentially all intercultural interactions the student partakes in and outside of the classroom. Fieldwork, in general, allows for the development of ICC skills since it pushes the students to use their knowledge, attitudes, knowledge, and language abilities to make themselves understood. For example, if the student is engaged in an intercultural encounter of this sort. In that case, they must adapt to the counterpart's coding and messaging since their first language becomes obsolete. The intercultural encounter necessitates the appropriate attitudes for ICC. If the students do not meet this requirement, they are confronted with their own biases, which they then are forced to change for successful communication. Their knowledge is also put to the test, especially those concerning social and societal norms.

Independent learning is a lifelong process that everyone engages with throughout their lives, both in and out of the classroom. Despite this fact, independent learning is never a given fact. It is always dependent on the learner's ability to reflect on their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop it further. Without reflection, the learner's past experiences will never grow into fruition. This suggests a classroom approach since the teacher's input and interaction with other students can be very constructive when facilitating independent learning (Byram, 1997, p. 69-70). However, using the classroom methodology for independent learning can prove challenging in the educational setting. Since independent learning encompasses so much outside of the classroom, the teachers would have difficulty assessing and monitoring their progress. To include this aspect of ICC acquisition into the assessment, the teacher would have to include a form of self-assessment item for that specific assignment. On the self-assessment, the teacher could inquire about how students have been able to reflect and develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes with the aim of increased ICC.

Though Byram (1997) never explicitly states foreign language literature as a source for ICC acquisition, it can be implied since literature as a tool can be utilized in two of the three areas of ICC learning that he presents. Reading literature as a learning activity can be used in the classroom and at home through independent study. In his critique of classroom presentations of other cultures through factual information, Byram (1997) unintentionally stresses the importance of the narrative when it comes to learning. Moreover, literature engages all three components of his ICC model, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, thus enabling growth and improvements within these areas. Attitudes are challenged when reading intercultural literature due to how the reader's own cultural biases are confronted. Knowledge is activated because the reader's understanding of the other culture is tested through the literary work. Skills are employed through the student's ability to interpret the text in a foreign language. Additionally, their discovery skills are used when they expand their knowledge of the literary work when reading. This ultimately begs the question of what research has found on the topic.

2.4 Intercultural learning through literature

A study conducted by the Georg-August-University Göttingen in Germany (Hecke, 2013, p. 119) concluded that reading literature results in increased intercultural competence. The study consisted of teacher-students teaching the graphic novels *Persepolis* (2007) and *La Perdida* to German secondary students from grades 8-13. Before reading the texts themselves, the teacher students taught classes about how to read graphic novels and gave lectures and tasks related to the cultural setting of the texts. This method allowed the teachers to scaffold and support the students even before reading the text. As a result of the pre-reading exercises, the students acquired some prior knowledge related to cultures presented in the text. The students could then connect the new information with texts themselves based on their previous background information. After reading the graphic novels, the teachers provided the students with post-reading activities to further facilitate the students understanding and knowledge of the books (Hecke, 2013, p. 119-123).

The study based its measurement of intercultural competence on the German educational standards of foreign language learning, which states that ICC consists of 3 components: sociocultural knowledge, willingness and abilities, and successful intercultural interaction (KMK, 2003 in; Hecke, 2013). Here we can see a strong influence from Byram (2007) since

the German educational standards presented here are in large part identical to Byram's components of ICC. According to the German educational standards, intercultural competence is thus a skill to be developed like reading. Furthermore, Ansgar Nünning (2007) in Hecke (2013) identifies four different levels of interaction in intercultural understanding. The first level is the language level, which concerns how one must understand the foreign words in the language to make sense of it. The second level is the textual level, which is how the individual words need to come together in a cohesive manner. The third level is the cultural level, which concerns how the text has to be guided by the individual's knowledge of the target culture. Therefore, the individual has to understand the target culture's communicative preferences and cultural connotations. The fourth level is the personal level, which entails the individual has to understand the actions and reasoning by getting into their mindset. However, this does not mean the individual has to agree with the action or its reasoning (Nünning, 2007 in; Hecke, 2013, p. 122).

However, intercultural competence is not automatically achieved through reading literature in all instances. In order to achieve intercultural competence through reading literature, certain pre-existing conditions have to be met. The first of these conditions is the reader's understanding of the target text. Again this relies on the language competency of the reader. If the reader lacks the skills and knowledge of the target text's language, they will fail to make sense of the text. In other words, there are clearly defined language barriers when it comes to using English literature in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The second of the pre-existing conditions is the target text itself and whether or not it authentically presents the intercultural information. The text can be authentic through the author belonging to the target culture and representing their culture accurately. As a result, the text choice needs to be carefully considered if the aim of reading the text is to increase intercultural competence (Hecke, 2013, p. 119-122).

Another condition is also added if the target text is a graphic novel, which was the case with the study from the University of Erfurt. Reading graphic novels relies on interpreting the images presented properly through visual literacy. It is not a given that a reader interprets or understands the image correctly. Since graphic novels or comics rely on still images, the panel's action requires context to be appropriately interpreted. For instance, the movement and act of someone raising their hand in the classroom cannot be shown but must be implied. An action like this can be indicated by showing the person with their arm extended, and the context suggests the action. Alternatively, arrows could also be used to show the movement

or action. To arrive at the correct conclusion in the panel, the reader needs the proper tools and knowledge of interpreting graphic novels (Hecke, 2013, p. 124-125).

Despite interpreting the visual elements of the graphic novel as a potential obstacle, the study concluded that using graphic novels usually assisted the readers in understanding and interpreting the text in the panels. In the EFL classroom, the language barrier can be worn down through the help of visuals, which provides context and meaning to foreign words. Reading graphic novels can thus help in increasing the reader's vocabulary. However, some words are too abstract for the students to understand based on the visuals provided in the panels. For instance, the students in the study could not understand communism after reading *La Perdida* since the word cannot be visually represented like many other lexical words. As a result, the teachers had to provide language support to make sense of challenging new vocabulary (Hecke, 2013, p. 125).

Another thing of note is that despite reading the appropriate literature and understanding the language, the aim of achieving increased intercultural competence through literature can backfire in certain instances. If read or interpreted in the wrong manner, readers can misinterpret the text's content which results in a reinforcement of certain stereotypes as opposed to deconstructing them. As a result, teachers play a crucial role when it comes to teaching intercultural literature. For example, after some students had read *La Perdida*, they were left with the impression that the entirety of Mexico is dangerous based on the depictions of Mexico City in the graphic novel. The teachers then had to clarify and explain that this stereotypical impression that the book presented was not the case in presenting Mexico as a whole (Hecke, 2013, p. 125-126).

Based on this study, we can conclude that reading English literature in the EFL classroom results in increased intercultural competence. However, certain pre-existing conditions must be met, like appropriate literature to facilitate intercultural learning, sufficient literacy in the English language, and the teacher's ability to deconstruct and present the narrative. If these conditions are not met, the individual will not be able to foster their intercultural competence properly. In addition, even though using graphic novels provide language support through contextualization in the panels' visuals, it also adds visual literacy as another component to understanding the text. Additionally, unfamiliar vocabulary that is not contextualized or too abstract to visualize will remain foreign to the reader. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of teachers when it comes to using increasing intercultural competence through

literature. The teacher serves as a guide for the students when navigating the literary work. Without the teachers, the students will struggle to make sense of the text. In addition, students are at risk of potentially developing or reinforcing stereotypes as opposed to dismantling and deconstructing them. Therefore, it can be concluded that the best way of developing intercultural competence is teacher-guided reading in the classroom as opposed to independent student-oriented reading. Furthermore, the study supports increased use of literature in school instead of decreased usage (Hecke, 2013, p. 119-127).

Another study also confirms the finding presented by Hecke (2013) that literature can help students develop their intercultural competence. The study was carried out by Li-Feng Lee (2013) on Taiwanese adolescents by using American young adult literature as the literary material. The methods used were a variety of qualitative methods such as response journals, group discussions, and semi-structured individual interviews. The study found that the students were using and developing skills relevant to intercultural competence like interaction, interpretation, and evaluation. The Interaction skill was used when students used their prior knowledge of the English language and knowledge related to the sociocultural context when trying to make sense of the text. When they described, explained, and made generalizations based on their prior knowledge, they used their interpretation skills. Finally, the students used their evaluation skills when evaluating the literary experience and story as a whole. After reading the literature, the study found that the students had increased their cultural awareness, which could be seen developing across multiple categories such as background information, stereotyped conceptions, comparing and contrasting, and reflective understanding. The study found that students had gained a general cultural knowledge about American culture after reading and asking questions concerning the background information connected to the story. After reading, the students were made aware of their stereotyped conceptions about American culture (Lee, 2013, p- 139-145).

Furthermore, students frequently compared and contrasted their Taiwanese culture with American culture and how American culture played into the characters' actions in the story. Finally, students reflected on the differences between Taiwanese and American cultures through contextualizing the literary work. Consequently, the students got a more open-minded and broader perspective on culture. After reading American literature, the students had a more nuanced view of American culture that was less dominated by the idealized and singular narrative of American culture they had been subjected to through television (Lee, 2013, p. 145-147).

A qualitative study by Luis Fernando Gómez Rodríguez from 2013 also found that students' intercultural competence benefited greatly from reading 'multicultural literature.' The study was conducted using numerous qualitative research methods such as field observations of students' interaction with the intercultural text, document analysis of student reflections, and semi-structured interviews of the students' experience working with intercultural literature. The participants were 23 undergraduate students between the age of eighteen to twenty-two. The study utilized the three components of ICC as presented by Byram (1997). The study focused on enhancing intercultural competence through U.S.' multicultural literature' in the EFL classroom. In accordance with Byram's ICC model, Gómez Rodríguez (2013) found that their knowledge of other cultures increased. The students had become more aware of socio-economic differences and the influence of gender and racial discrimination due to reading literature (Gómez Rodríguez, 2013, p. 95-108)

Furthermore, their attitudes had also become increasingly open-minded and tolerant than before reading intercultural literature. In other words, the students had become more aware of how stereotypes are the result of ethnic-cultural othering. This change in attitude resulted from how the students fostered empathy for the characters in the fictional work. Finally, the students developed their ICC skills, such as their skills of discovery, development, and comparing. These were utilized and improved by using prior language and cultural knowledge, adding new information to that knowledge, and finally reflecting on the text to make sense of it. The study concluded that literature could increase students' critical cultural awareness. In turn, this allowed the students to think critically about their own culture and connecting social issues (Gómez Rodríguez, 2013, p. 95-108).

2.5 The representation of otherness in literature and mass media

Christiane Lütge (2013) discusses the importance of understanding otherness in order to develop intercultural competence. Likewise, this is something that is reflected in the Common European Framework in developing intercultural competence. Lütge (2013) states that to possess positive attitudes towards otherness, the students must first learn how to understand the experience of otherness through the contextualization that literature provides. Simply teaching about cultural or ethnic otherness is not sufficient for this goal. By using literature, the students can experience attitudes of empathy towards ethnic-cultural otherness by inserting

themselves in the shoes of the protagonist (Lütge, 2013, p. 97-98). However, as Grit Alter (2013) discusses, intercultural competence depends on the pre-conceived notions of otherness students possess when they engage in intercultural literature. These pre-conceived notions are the result of the literature and media that students have been exposed to and how these types of media portray ethnic-cultural otherness. Children are particularly susceptible to the influences of these media representations (Alter, 2013, p. 151). As Barker and Jane (2016) discuss, representation relates to how the world is socially constructed and presented to us (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 10).

Through the media, specific ideas of ethnicity and culture are emphasized through the manufacturing of stereotypes. These stereotypes thereby have the power to reinforce negative views of the ‘other’ cultures and ethnicities. In essence, stereotypical representation enforces the idea of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 313-314). Historically, the cultural and ideological hegemony has been defined by The West. As a result, non-Western cultures and ethnicities have been sidelined. These marginalized cultures and people have thus had their identity represented through Western literature and media. As a result of this, there is a general lack of representation of marginalized people in mass media (Barker & Jane, 2016). This lack of representation also applies to the overall presentation of marginalized stories in literature and media.

Consequently, when students approach literature by marginalized people, they are already approaching the literature with a distorted sense of ‘otherness’. In other words, that the ‘other’ culture is something different from their own. These past representations have left the students with ideas of marginalized people and cultures that are either false or superficial (Alter, 2013, p.153).

2.6 Perspectives on teaching culture in the classroom

When it comes to teaching about culture in the classroom, there are multiple approaches and perspectives that have been utilized in school throughout the past century. In the first half of the 20th century, culture was traditionally taught with an approach that Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) describe as the deficit model. This method involves the dominant culture assessing cultural differences and practices in accordance with their own criteria, which quickly

becomes ethnocentric. As a result of this, certain cultural expressions and practices were deemed as lesser based on the dominant culture. More specifically, Non-Western cultural practices have been viewed rather critically (Gutiérrez and Rogoff, 2003, p. 19).

In the late 1960s, a new approach to teaching culture arose in response to this. This method is referred to as the cultural styles approach. As opposed to the deficit model, the cultural styles approach tries to describe cultures from an objective perspective without any pre-conceived notion of what is considered a good cultural practice. The hierarchical categorization that the ethnocentric model allows thereby abandon in favor of cultural relativism. However, one issue with the cultural styles approach is that despite its good intentions, it could enhance certain stereotypes if used as a method when teaching culture in the classroom. The issue here stems from the fact that individual traits and characteristics are stretched to fit and include an entire group of people. Culture, in this perspective, becomes something that is built into the individual and the group. In this approach, there is an overall tendency to categorically label entire people based on their cultural background and not their individual traits. Another issue is that it is too simplistic since it involves reducing complex cultures into its more apparent features (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 19-21).

As an alternative to this, Gutiérrez & Rogoff (2003) suggests using a cultural-historical approach. This approach takes into account the historical context when analyzing and describing cultures. A cultural-historical approach thereby emphasizes that cultures are dynamic instead of static, which is how cultures are generally perceived and presented in the cultural styles approach. Finally, Gutiérrez & Rogoff (2003) stresses that when it comes to discussing cultures in the classroom, one should emphasize discussing individual cases instead of essentialist cultural descriptions. When teaching culture in the classroom, there needs to be an emphasis on the individuals' varying degrees of participation in the culture instead of the idea of fixed cultural belonging. Too often, we see individual characteristics being described to their ethnic or cultural background. In essence, cultural mobility has to be taken into account when teaching about cultures. However, this does not mean that those cultural descriptions should be excluded from the classroom, but they must be used carefully and precisely. In addition, the tendency for cultural participation within a given cultural activity needs a contextualized explanation model (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 21-23). Susanne Reichl (2013) also has a similar suggestion to teaching culture in the classroom. She suggests teaching cultural practices and their relationship with identity construction through intercultural texts.

Within this learning process, the character's identity is at the center of the story and not ideas of cultural boundaries (Reichl, 2013, p. 110-111).

3. Methodology

The methodology of this thesis utilizes a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews. The aim of these interviews is to answer the research questions posed earlier in the introduction. This thesis uses a qualitative study to delve into how reading literature affects a person and their views. In trying to answer these open-ended questions, a quantitative survey with a series of set responses would produce insufficient answers. In a qualitative interview, the interviewee can respond freely, and there are no limitations to how they might express themselves. As a result, a quantitative study is not suitable. The qualitative research method for this thesis is the narrative interview and analysis method. A narrative interview is an interview centered on a chronological and coherent story or account told by the interviewee (Howitt, 2016, p. 365-366). By utilizing this method, we can get to the heart of the issue: how we subjectively experience and interpret literature and how this, in turn, changed our feelings, knowledge, and opinion of a different culture.

The interest in studying narrative as a legitimate method, stems from the underlying functions of narratives. A narrative is in itself a social construct that organizes events and experiences through contextualization from the narrator. Analyzing a narrative is thus also an analysis of the narrator. Deconstruction of the narrative is, therefore, an interpretation of the storied self, or in other words, the stories the individual constructs about ourselves and others. Narrative analysis is originally a method associated with the practice of psychology. However, the narrative approach also has more significant sociological implications. Narrative construction is linked to identity and language practices in a broader social context. The storied self cannot be understood in isolation but must be viewed with larger societal interaction and influence. When analyzing the individual's narrative, we are essentially looking at a cause-and-effect relationship between their account and societal impact. The account thereby has implications outside the storied self which means that findings in the data can be found outside the specific selection and be applied to a larger population (Howitt, 2016, p. 365-373). In summary, narrative interview and analysis is an extensive and legitimate research method regardless of academic practices.

3.1 Interview selection

The selection for the interviews consists of three students who have attended a university-level multicultural English literature course called English language and literature two (2ENL512-4). The participants are third-year lector students at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN). The reason for building the interviews on this selection is because students at the university level tend to be more mature, experienced, and reflected when it comes to processing literature as opposed to upper secondary students. In addition, it is more practical to set up such an interview because these students are of the age required to give consent to participate in the study. The selection for the interview was initially gathered with the help of the program coordinator for the lector course. The program coordinator invited those participating in the study by sending them an invitation written by me and contained all my contact information. However, after the first participant saw the project invitation, news of the interview spread by word of mouth instead of the last two participants discovering the invitation independently. If the project had gotten more replies, only the first three would have been chosen.

Nevertheless, the three respondents for this interview were the only people requesting to partake in the interviews. Consequently, the study gained more validity since an independent faction helped to assemble the selection, thereby removing personal bias as a factor in the selection. However, this type of selection can also be a significant shortcoming concerning the validity of the study. If the first three of the selected people had one specific demographical belonging, the study would not have taken other people with a different demographical background into account. For example, if the only respondents were male, any conclusions drawn from the study have to be weighed against the fact that the demographic of the study is heavily skewed. Skewed selections lack validity because when conducting research, the study aims to derive a conclusion that discusses a broader phenomenon in the overall population. When the population is not truly represented in the selection, the study can not truly represent the population.

Nevertheless, a skewed selection does not mean the study has no validity. It just means that the study's result is mainly applied to its selection's demographic. For example, if a study has little minority representation, that does not mean that the results of the majority representation are invalid. A skewed selection was also the case for this thesis since the majority of the

participants were male. However, this is the result of the selection consisting of an odd number of people which means that it would be impossible to split the selection 50-50 regardless.

3.2 Interview practicalities

The interviews had a rough time frame of about 30 minutes, but as an interviewer, I was flexible on the overall duration of the interviews. Throughout the interviews, I had to dynamically supply additional questions depending on the answers I got, resulting in each interview being unique in their questions and answers. Nevertheless, the interview guide was utilized the most when asking questions, though some questions were dropped if the participant had already discussed the topic in an earlier question. It should be noted that there is generally a time constraint in all qualitative interviews. A common advisement in qualitative research is that no interview should be longer than two hours. Short interviews are advised in qualitative research because more extended interviews do not necessarily result in higher quality data, it simply adds to the quantity of it. For instance, longer interviews can be very draining for the interviewee resulting in less motivated or clear answers (Howitt, 2016, p. 68-69). This occurrence was also the case for the interviews for the project, where I felt the responses I received after approximately twenty minutes were less complimentary. This could also be the result of the earlier questions being more open-ended, thus making it easier for the participant to give more fulfilling answers. In relation to the time frame for the interviews for this thesis, all of the interviews were between twenty-five to twenty-nine minutes. None of the interviews broke the time frame given to the interviews. One could argue that the interviews were a bit too short. The first two interviews were held on the same day, and the final interview was held three days later after the first two interviews were fully transcribed. These experiences possibly resulted in me analyzing my first two interviews more critically and ultimately produce a better final interview than the previous interviews. The interviews were held at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences in Hamar group and meeting room. The room was booked a couple of weeks in advance through INN's Time Edit application to secure a stable interview condition for all the interviews.

The interviews were recorded with two smartphones using the app Diktafon, approved by The Norwegian Center of Research Data (NSD). Diktafon is an app that works as a "nettskjema," which encrypts the data until it is safely uploaded to The University of Oslo's (UiO) secure cloud. The reason for using both devices during the interview is to secure the data without the

danger of corrupting it with either a bad recording or other forms of technical issues. In addition, one of the guidelines for using the app provided by UiO is to use more than one device when recording (UiO, 2021). Unfortunately, technical difficulties with this app occurred during the first interview but luckily did not reoccur for the second interview. The recording of the first interview on one of the phones got deleted before it was uploaded to the UiO cloud. As a result, the first transcription was based on the recording located the furthest away from the interviewee.

Consequently, some replies were inaudible due to the distance. The first device deleted the recording on the app due to the app requiring internet access, which the phone didn't have due to not having a SIM card or being connected to the local Wi-Fi. Moreover, on the phone that did save the interview, it sent the interview to the wrong "Nettskjema." After attempting to send the interview again to the correct "Nettskjema," the app froze and required a hard restart of the phone. I could not send the interview to the right "Nettskjema" and used the UiO account that was not connected to my student ID at INN. These technical issues were corrected for the remaining interviews by connecting both phones to the local Wi-Fi network.

Another important consideration is that due to the presence of the corona pandemic during the writing of this thesis, the interview had to be conducted under the Norwegian health department's regulations. The presence of the Corona pandemic was also an important consideration. That meant that the interview had to be undertaken with a two-meter distance between the parties since the interview was over fifteen minutes long to reduce the possibility of disease transmission (FHI, 2021). The pandemic posed somewhat of a challenge towards completing the thesis since physical meeting with others was generally advised against in favor of digital social interaction. The result of this was difficulties connected to gathering the selection for the project since few students were willing to participate in the interview on behalf of it being a physical interview instead of a digital interview. Due to the agreement with NSD and their data safety measures, the interview could not be done digitally through Skype or Discord since the application providers do not meet the NSD standards of safe data processing. Digital recording programs or communication applications need to utilize encrypted servers and data storage to be in accordance with the NSD contract based on the Norwegian state and the EU's privacy legislation. For the interview to comply with these legislations, way too many resources would be needed, which a student project at this level would not be able to achieve. These factors were essential for the interview being conducted face to face.

Another critical step before the interview was the piloting stage. Since I had no prior experience conducting qualitative interviews, I needed to trail my interview before running the actual interview. The trailing was done by conducting multiple practice interviews, which I assessed afterward. Here I looked at my overall interviewing style and identified widespread problems. Based on the practice interviews, I wrote notes which were used to modify the final interview guide used in all of the interviews. Identifying and correcting problems is extremely important since specific issues can derail the actual interview resulting in a qualitative study with little to no validity (Howitt, 2016, p. 70).

Another step towards increasing the validity of the interview is interview comparisons. Typically, a qualitative study is part of a larger research project consisting of multiple interviews conducted by various interviewers. In these studies, researchers can contrast and compare their interviews and assess flaws or weaknesses in the interviews and improve them (Howitt, 2016, p. 70). However, this is not the case with students' theses. One of the conditions for getting the project approved by the NSD is that the data handling is safe and secure, following their guidelines. All of the people who have access to the project have to be named and listed so that the sensitive data of the project is not shared outside of the necessary personnel. Including other students on that list of people with access is not deemed good data handling, resulting in the application being declined. Furthermore, sharing the data after the application is approved is also illegal (NSD, 2021a).

3.3 Transcription

One of the most common methods for transcribing qualitative interviews is the Jefferson method, where additional symbols are used in addition to the letters of the words being said to provide more information. These symbols are based on standardized computer symbols like the 'at' sign. As a result, it is one of the most preferred transcription methods for researchers transcribing audio recordings on computers. One essential component that researchers have to keep in mind when transcribing with the Jefferson method is that not everything has to be bombarded with extra symbols. As the researcher transcribes, they have to consider where it is necessary or of importance to include these symbols (Howitt, 2016, p. 142-160). However, in relation to narrative analysis, a playscript or secretarial type of transcription is preferred. The difference is that in a narrative analysis, how something is said is not nearly as important as what the respondent is saying. Including the extra symbols of the Jefferson method could

therefore be a nuisance rather than a benefit. However, if how something is said is essential, Narrative analysis does not exclude the use of the Jefferson method (Howitt, 2016, p. 379).

Nevertheless, this study only uses a secretarial type of transcript. A secretarial transcript was the safest choice since I am not an experienced researcher and have never used the Jefferson method before. Using the Jefferson method with this lack of experience could have resulted in an unnecessary and messy transcription that would have detracted from the overall themes in the interview. However, one issue with using a secretarial type of transcription is that there is no standardization. The lack of standardization could result in secretarial type transcribers having vastly different transcriptions from one another, leading to analysis difficulties in larger institutional studies, compromising the validity (Howitt, 2016, p. 134-142). Regardless, this form of validity issue is not a concern for this study since the person preparing, conducting, transcribing, and analyzing the interview is the same person.

One standardized aspect of other transcription methods used in the thesis is the numbered lines of speech and the lettered symbols to indicate the speaker. Unlike the Jefferson method, the lines are numbered in alternation between who is speaking. Pauses in speech are marked with the punctuation “(.)” symbol of the Jefferson method where three punctuations “(…)” signifies an extended pause (Howitt, 2016, p. 147). The reason for using these specific aspects of the Jefferson method is that they are particularly useful in organizing the transcription instead of just providing more work in the form of unnecessary detail. Another thing utilized in the transcription that is uncommon for secretarial transcripts is the inclusion of non-lexical speech like; “ehhh” and “mhmm.” The reason for including these details is that this form of speech signifies meaning like insecurity or affirmation that are helpful to the overall analysis. Moreover, this inclusion adds to the experience of the flow and feel of an actual oral interview which can hold meaning within the narrative of the storied self. In summary, the transcript method is a secretarial transcript with a few additions for signifying intention.

3.4 Narrative analysis

As stated earlier, the data analysis method utilized for the transcription is narrative analysis. This methodology involves deep analysis of the individual’s account. At the heart of narrative research is searching for the transformation or change within the interviewee’s life. The first

step in narrative analysis, like all qualitative analyses, is reading and familiarization of the interview transcript. Repeated reading of the data material is necessary to identify the key concepts within the data. The key concepts in narrative analysis can be divided into three categories according to Crossley (2007) in Howitt (2016, p. 379-380). These three categories are narrative tone, imagery, and themes. The narrative tone in the narrative analysis is how the storied self's narrative comes across to the interviewer. The narrative tone is assessed from both what is said and how it is said. In other words, it is the content of the narrative and the manner of the style of the narrator. An example of narrative tone could be how the narrator tells a pessimistic story through the sad contents within the narrative or telling a happy story through the narrator's style despite the painful contents within. Imagery is how a narrator uses language to create mental images within the listener. Each narrator uses a form of imagery that is unique to them. When looking for imagery in the transcript, one usually looks for visualizations, symbols, and metaphors that the narrator uses. After identifying the imagery, the researcher aims to identify the causes of why this specific form of imagery was used. For instance, the researcher could assess the influence of the interviewee's education in why this particular form of imagery was used. For example, a sociologist would probably use a different form of vocabulary than an economist when describing capital. Themes are the underlying or reoccurring meaning within a narrative or the central ethos within the story. When looking for the theme or themes within an analysis, the researcher might identify that the story's theme is betrayal, since the story deals with the narrator being constantly let down by those around him. The final or concurrent step of the analysis is writing up the research report. It is important to note that analysis and writing up the findings are not necessarily two distinct processes (Crossley, 2007 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 379-380).

3.5 The interview guide and its implementation

The interview guide for the interviews is based on McAdam's (1993) semi-structured narrative interview protocol (McAdams, 1993 in; In Howitt, 2016, p. 376-380). Traditionally, in interview guides, the interviewer outlines some structure to the interview by providing a list of topics that are to be covered. These topics can then be developed into a list of loosely formulated questions that could be used for the interview. As stated earlier, when interviewing in relation to the interview guide, it is essential for the interviewer not to follow this list rigidly. If the interviewee has already included a topic, one should not retread the topic to cross off the issues like a checklist where everything has to be covered in a certain amount of time.

Retreading topics could cause friction between the interviewer and the interviewee since it could seem as if the interviewer is not paying attention to what they are saying. In addition, it also questions the validity of the interview's implementation since it adds a scriptedness similar to that of a quantitative study, like that of a Likert-scale interview. When conducting a qualitative interview, the most crucial ethos to keep in mind is flexibility. Interviewers should have the role of an active listener and not that of speaker or instructor (Howitt, 2016, p. 69). Some of the topics included in the interview guide are ethnocentrism, stereotypes, racism, identity, cultural perception, and historical context. Again, it is essential to be flexible when interviewing, and this flexibility also extends to uncertainty to concepts and terminology. If certain language is unclear to the interviewee, one should reformulate the question instead of explaining the meaning of the word since this interferes with the role of the interviewer in a qualitative study.

Though flexibility and a desire towards spontaneity are generally preferred in qualitative research, the interview guide for this thesis is based on the narrative interview proposed by McAdams (1993) in Howitt (2016, 376-379). The suggested method here entails a more scripted approach. The narrative interview is supposed to develop from preliminary questions to closing questions in chronological order. The purpose of the interview is to cover events in the interviewee's life, requiring a more rigid approach to interviewing than traditional qualitative interviewing, according to narrative analysis theory (McAdams, 1993 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 376-380). Due to these underlying aims, the interview guide is more concrete and on-topic than, for instance, a phenomenological interview guide with few to no pre-defined questions (Howitt, 2016, p. 308-337). Of course, some adaptability must be maintained regardless, as was the case in the interviews. However, the interviews are based on set questions which means that the core questions are the same for each interviewee.

It is important to distinguish between the interview guide for this thesis and McAdams's (1993) original interview protocol. McAdams's (1993) original interview protocol was aimed at life story interviews (biographical interviews) and not specific events, themes, or subjects. This underlying structure means that many of the questions or designs from McAdams's protocol did not suit the aim of this thesis's interviews. The interview for this thesis still follows the core of McAdams 7-core questions, such as the one where the interviewer asks the interviewee to refer to personal events as if it was a book and having them cover critical events. The significant difference here is that the interviewee only covers their life experiences concerning

intercultural literature and competence. Everything outside of this topic is irrelevant to the thesis (McAdams, 1993 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 376-380).

The first of the 7-core questions for the interview, focus on how the interviewees view the different phases of their life when reading intercultural literature, what those different phases are, and how the stages follow one another. This question is posed in a manner that asks the interviewee to view the experience as a journey in a book and the different phases of their experience as the chapters within the said book. For all the participants, their answers were structured in a similar way, where the first phase was before the intercultural literature course, the second phase was during the course, and the final phase was after the course (Appendix, p. 89).

The second of the 7-core questions ask the interviewee what their peak experiences and individual incidents would be, as a part of their intercultural literary and personal journey. Here the interviewees were asked to discuss not only their best experiences but also their worst. The participants were also given examples like changes in mindsets or attitudes for good experiences. As well as critical incidents or stereotyping as bad experiences to ground the participant's answers. Here the participants similarly structured their answers. Half of their experiences were related to the classroom, while the other half was outside the classroom. Finally, the interviewees were asked if reading intercultural literature could remedy their negative intercultural communicative experiences. The overall structure of answering the question was the only similarity between the participants since the contents of their answers were vastly different from one another. This variety of responses in the participants' content stems primarily from the open-ended structure of the question. As a result, these first two core questions took up half of the interviews' overall run time ranging between 10 to 15 minutes (Appendix, p. 89-90).

The third of the core questions asks the participants to name the three most impactful intercultural literary works and what precisely the literary work did for them. Here all the participants named different literary works, both works they enjoyed and works they didn't. The fourth core questions relate to in what way the teacher-students will utilize intercultural literature when they become teachers (Appendix, p. 90)

The fifth core question asks the interviewees if they experienced any issues concerning reading intercultural literature, such as language difficulties or conceptual confusion (Appendix, p.

92). The sixth core questions focus on the participants' ideology surrounding literature. The first sub-question asks the interviewee if literature is an educational tool or entertainment. The second sub-question asks if literature can dismantle stereotypes in everyone and what the potential obstacles are in dismantling those stereotypes (Appendix, p. 90-91).

The final core question went back to the idea of the interviewees assessing their experiences as if it was a book and asked them to identify the core themes that ran through their journey of reading intercultural literature. A core theme in this instance refers to the underlying narrative or message that ran through their entire experience. Asking the respondents this question is in many ways similar to asking what their experience was really about (Appendix, p. 91).

Before the interview, I gave the interviewees a short oral presentation of the interview guidelines and an introduction to the topic. The guideline or introduction focused on presenting overall approaches to how the interview was going to be conducted. The interview guidelines for the interview were the following: the interviewee will be doing most of the talking, the interview will be recorded, there are no right or wrong answers, and finally, refrain from referring to other third-party people by name (Appendix, p. 88). The reason for this last point is that the contract with NSD states that no third-party people are to be named due to data safety concerns. If third-party people were to be named, more steps need to be taken to ensure data safety (NSD, 2021b). Ultimately, the interview introduction serves as a topical presentation of intercultural competence and an introduction to how the interview is structured. The reason for having this short introduction is to familiarize the participants with terms like intercultural competence and the topic so that the answers would not falter due to a lack of comprehension.

3.6 Interpreting the data

When analyzing the transcript, the researcher should know the different interpretive theoretical perspectives found within the narrative method. Without it, the researcher would lack a structured and systematic approach when interpreting the data resulting in decreased research validity. Howitt (2016, p. 380-381) presents six interpretive perspectives on how data can be analyzed in narrative analysis. These perspectives are the Sjuzet-Fabula perspective, Holistic-

content perspective, Holistic-form perspective, Categorical-content perspective, Categorical-form perspective, and Critical narrative analysis perspective. The Sjuzet-Fabula perspective aims to distinguish between the Sjuzet and the Fabula within the narrative transcript. Sjuzet is how the story is being told, while Fabula is the events within the narrative. Here the researcher aims to underline the Sjuzet of the transcript. In practice, this would mean that individual words, phrases, and segments would be marked by the researcher. The highlighted items would be elements like emphasis, reflection, and interruptions within the overarching story. One issue with this perspective is that the distinction between Sjuzet and Fabula is not always so clear. The holistic-content perspective, on the other hand, focuses mainly on the events within the narrative. Here, the researcher seeks to unravel how the individual events relate to the overall narrative to uncover the reoccurring themes of the interview (Hiles and Cermak, 2008 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 380-381).

On the contrary, the holistic-form perspective focuses on the form of the story instead of the content. Here the researcher aims to discover the plot of the narrative, which the researcher further categorizes. Hiles and Cermak (2008) in Howitt (2016) presents four different categories of narrative which are romance (reinforcing the social order), comedy (undermining the social order), tragedy (reduction in social order), and satire (challenging the social order). Moreover, the categorical-content perspective is similar to the holistic-content perspective in that it aims to identify reoccurring themes in the narrative. The difference here lies in that this method strives to find the themes in the data instead of the themes being imposed by the researcher (Hiles & Cermak, 2008 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 380-381).

Furthermore, the categorical-form perspective also has significant similarities with its holistic counterpart. The key difference here is that instead of finding underlying plot archetypes within the narrative, the method instead focuses on central reoccurring aspects related to the form of the story. For instance, this perspective could look for a feature like laughing, which can be found within the narrative. The researcher would then study how laughing relates to the overall form of the narrative. Finally, the critical narrative analysis is unique from the previously mentioned approaches in that it brings a social constructionist viewpoint to analyzing the data. Here the researcher aims to uncover how views, meanings, and themes in the narrative are constructed. In addition, this method relies on a thorough reading of the material. This perspective is thus very similar to discourse analysis. According to Emerson and Frosh (2004) in Howitt (2016), this interpretation method utilizes more of the transcript in the study. More specifically, to use transcripts of the interview object that emphasize their

viewpoints and justifications in explaining their behavior (Emerson & Frosh, 2004 in; Howitt, 2016, p. 381).

Moreover, the method emphasizes illustrating the interviewee's own beliefs through the transcript in the analysis. These central aspects of the transcription are then connected and theorized through different theoretical approaches relating to the cause of the interviewee's narrative account. For instance, an account of mental illness could utilize the theoretical framework from psychology to explain the interviewee's behaviors or beliefs (Howitt, 2016, p. 380-381).

These interpretative approaches are not absolute when it comes to analyzing narrative data. They are, however, a valuable and essential guide in the analysis and interpretation of the data. With these perspectives in mind, the researcher has a greater awareness of their own biases. In this thesis, multiple interpretative approaches are applied in the interpretation of the transcript. Nevertheless, the Sjuzet-Fabula perspective, the Holistic-content perspective, and the Critical-narrative analysis perspective are utilized the most. The Sjuzet-Fabula perspective was used when trying to distinguish between what is being said in the transcript and how it is said, and how these two aspects are related to one another. The Holistic-content perspective was used the most overall since the thesis deliberately focused on the respondents' narrative and not how they told their narrative. Ultimately, these interpretative elements were helpful because they allow us to study the distinction between the interviewee's story and their perspective of it. Finally, the Critical Narrative Analysis perspective was used because the thesis fundamentally seeks the causes of the interviewee's perspectives and beliefs.

3.7 Utilizing the theoretical framework in the analysis and discussion

When analyzing data in the narrative method, the researcher usually draws upon a theoretical framework outside of the interpretative approaches inherent in the methodology. For instance, narrative analysis can utilize psychological theories in its research, like how it is done in Howitt's (2016) book. This thesis uses the theoretical framework presented earlier in the theory and research section. This section draws upon a larger set of sociological theories and studies relating to communication and culture. In addition, it also draws upon the work of Michael Byram (1997), which could be said to utilize a sociological framework in teaching a foreign language to better intercultural communication. Finally, the thesis will draw upon past

research on utilizing literature to teach intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. These perspectives are central to the discussion of the thesis. The findings from the study are linked up with central theories, perspectives, and terminology from the theory section. For instance, the interviewee's attitudes about culture are studied in light of a social constructionist perspective on culture, attitudes, and the socialization process.

4. Analysis and results

The analysis delves into each participants' core theme ranging in the order of Participant One to Three. The question of core themes is essential for the interview as a whole, and the narrative themes in general a result of how themes function as a summation of their entire experience with intercultural literature. As discussed in the method chapter, core themes in the context of this thesis are the underlying narrative threads that run through their entire experience of reading intercultural literature. Or in other words, the essence of what their reading journey was actually about. The analysis is structured in this way because trying to find parallels in narrative tone and imagery was not particularly fruitful, considering how these aspects differed significantly for each participant. Instead, it is best to keep these things short and instead focus on the bigger issues, which are the themes or key points brought up in the interviews. After discussing the individual core theme of each participant, the analysis aims are framed with three central findings from each of the interviews. The purpose here is to draw out similarities and differences between the findings in the interviews and how these differ. How the participants use narrative tone and imagery to convey their meaning will also be brought up when necessary. However, the focus of this analysis still lies in the themes or critical issues of the interviews. After presenting and dissecting each participants' core theme and other central findings, the analysis concludes by looking at these findings in light of the research questions of the thesis. This section will also summarize all of the three components of narrative analysis across the interviews.

4.1 Participant One's core theme: Identity and cultural belonging

Finding 1, failing literary interest due to lack of empathic attachment to characters of the literary work.

Participant One stated that the theme of their journey in reading intercultural literature is "identity and cultural belonging." This theme was central to the participant's journey because literature became a way to connect emotionally to people who had experienced the same issues they had encountered throughout their life. This respondent is a Norwegian with a dual ethnic background and consequently experienced emotional and cultural exclusion due to not relating

to the literature they read in and out of school during their childhood and teenage years. As the student, themselves says, “I never felt like I identified with some of the characters [...] I was like the only non-Norwegian kid, so I was... I wouldn’t say stigmatized, but I could never connect to certain things.” The sum of all these troubles was the interviewee losing interest in literature as a whole when they started secondary school, “I kind of stopped reading books when I got to secondary or upper secondary school.” As a result of literature and the media having a lack of representation of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the respondent felt excluded. In this period, the participant became more interested in video games. However, some of the literary interests picked up again when the respondent discovered Japanese mangas and comics. The participant also explains that their non-ethnic Norwegian parent tried to get them to read literature from their culture. However, the interviewee did not find the literature interesting and thus read less literature as a whole in this period. It wasn’t until the participant started at INN that they picked up an interest in literature again. This renewed interest was in part due to how experiencing the intercultural literature provided by the course syllabus. For this section of the interview, the respondent’s narrative tone appears to be characterized with regret that they missed out on reading literature during their adolescence. This finding of losing literary interest due to not relating to literature because of emotional exclusion is unique to Participant One. This process is directly tied with their dual ethnic background, which none of the other respondents had.

Finding 2, affirmation and validation of personal identity through literature

The course introduced the respondent to intercultural literature that presented the same issues of not feeling connected to one specific culture. The student resonated with how the literature presented feelings like being stuck in between and not belonging anywhere. The label of being in-between and standing both outside the cultural majority and the cultural minority was a burden the participant had to bear when growing up and was not something they could not fully accept until they reached adulthood. Thus, the intercultural syllabus literature became a way for them to come to terms with their own cultural identity. As the student themselves says, “Suddenly I found like books like *Joy Luck Club* [...] And [...] Suddenly, I could relate to this, you know?” They accepted that they belonged to both cultures and that this form of cultural belonging was equally valid. Their imagery is characterized by dramatization through the use and emphasis on “Suddenly,” which indicates that the change was significant, abrupt, and unexpected from where their mindset had been previously. As the respondent went on to say, “I talked to my parents about it, and in the end, I had to realize that I am both.” Here, the

narrative tone is filled with relief as if they had gotten a better understanding of this struggle and their identity.

It should be noted here that the syllabus literature never specifically focused on the student's exact cultural minority background. The literature instead had an empathic appeal that touched on the same issues that they also had experienced. The culture that the literature centered on was partly related to the cultural area of the student's minority background, which they believed was part of the reason they could relate to these literary works and not to other literary works.

The problems surrounding dual identity was also something Participant Three reflected on when asked about challenges they encountered when reading the syllabus literature. "It is complex, especially in terms of dual identity, that [...] you get this big melting pot of hybridity, dual identity, of wanting to sort of... Stay true to your own identity, and at the same time wanting to fit in [...] the themes here can be hard to grasp for me as a... Norwegian". For the respondent, there were no difficulties in terms of language when reading the literary work. However, the interviewee struggled with grasping the concept of dual cultural identity. Here Participant Three also mentions *The Joy Luck Club* as the literary work that introduced them to the idea. The difference between Participant One and Three is that the literary work was an affirmation of their own identity. In contrast, for Participant Three, it was an opportunity to explore identities and perspectives outside of their own.

Finding 3, the importance of guided reading and collective analysis when working with literature

One of the main things that ran through Participant One's interview was how the classroom environment proved the most fruitful when gaining comprehension of the literary work. When asked directly about the differences between reading a book by themselves and going through it in class, they elaborated that without the teacher and their co-students, not only would they not have been able to find these literary works, but even if they did the reading experience would have been vastly different. They said, "They helped me a lot, so I think really the guidance part is important [...] When you go through it with other people, especially in class, and you receive other people's opinion about it, I guess [...] the teacher who probably has knowledge about, you know, the book and topic, and can say a few words... And then you yourself can add a few words". The participant reflected on that when reading alone; the story

generally becomes only a story. However, when used in a classroom, the teacher can enlighten the students with knowledge of the context surrounding the text and tools for analysis like textual awareness. They said, “If I generalized a bit... most kids would find the story, even if they read would be like, you know; Hmmmm, this is cool, he’s like me, but then just put the book away. But when you get to work with it like I did in the course [...], you know it adds another level of complexity”.

The issue of just reading the literary work without further reflection was also something Participant Two discussed. They said, “I can admit that before I started studying at a higher education, I never thought about this sort of thing. I just read it and was like, Oh, that was cool [...] same with films also, just watching films [...] Before I started studying. I saw it and was like; Yeah, that’s alright.” This statement would indicate that the teacher plays a crucial role in encouraging critical thinking of the literary work. This finding was also found in Participant Three’s interview, who mentioned their teacher as an essential factor in discovering and becoming aware of marginalized people's issues across the world. They said, “I’m very grateful for the teacher that we had [...] She was a great teacher... And reading these books by myself would definitely not have [...] Given me as much. Either in not as much insight, not as much historical knowledge, not as much perspective, so being able to put those works of fiction in a context is very important... Also, discussing with your peers... And [...] activating and engaging your own thought processes”.

4.2 Participant Two’s core theme: Personal development

Finding 1, deconstruction of stereotypes through cultural knowledge and intercultural learning

Participant Two stated personal “development” as the core theme of their journey. For the interviewee, the experiences they gathered from the course and the literature became a revelation. They were in large part unaware of the world outside of western culture and its influences. For instance, Modern-day Native Americans were largely unknown to the respondent. Iranians, too, were also somewhat invisible to the respondent. However, they mentioned that their previous knowledge was mainly based on “those stereotypes.” This statement was what the participant answered when asked about what they knew about Iran

prior to reading *Perspolis* (2007). It is uncertain precisely what they mean by this. Still, it can be inferred based on a previous statement, “you always build up stereotypes [...] A thing of me is mostly comical [...] I definitely do an accent for a friend or something”, that these stereotypes are not necessarily malicious. In the statement above, the respondent was discussing the Irish and the Scots. It can ultimately be presumed that the interviewee used to have a similar relation to Iran, where Iranians are characterized by a dominant Middle Eastern accent for a comical effect. That said, it is reasonable to consider that the participant may be referring to certain stereotypes of Iran that are prevalent in the West: namely, religious extremism and terrorism. In other words, the stereotypes they are referring to are not just funny accents but also overgeneralized ideas of the ‘other’ culture that are prevalent in literature and other forms of media. It is important to note that the respondent’s sincerity characterizes the overall narrative tone for this section, and the way they talk about the topic is profound. Reading the syllabus literature thus became a way for the student to discover these cultures and perspectives “second hand,” as they would put it. The personal development that the individual discusses as their core theme can thus be understood as going from almost utterly oblivious to being aware of these cultures. The respondent achieved this by reading stories by people from these cultures instead of consuming stories about these cultures as told by the West. The unknown cultures were seen as these stereotypical archetypes and thus became fully realized with actual depth and further removed from general surface-level stereotypes based on collective ignorance. These stereotypes speak less about the people who have them, than the society and culture that produces them. We can infer that these stereotypical perceptions result from how minorities are portrayed in the Western media and literature at large.

The discussion of stereotypes was also relevant for Participant One. In their interview, they were asked whether or not they had fallen into the trap of stereotyping others themselves despite having a multicultural and dual ethnic background. Here the respondent said, “Yeah, I mean I come from a pretty conservative home, so... Most of my life have been [...] these people are like this, and those people are like that... And... I can’t say it was any different for me. I even fell into some of those categories myself. Like my mom pushed super hard on my education”. Here the interviewee reflects on how their upbringing shaped them and how their parents’ ideology of the world regarding views or attitudes on other cultures and people was implemented into their own.

Interestingly enough, they reflect on how they fit into certain racial or cultural stereotypes when growing up. Later on, Participant One reflected on how literature as a whole holds an

incredible power to shape and change peoples' minds and that literature itself, if misused, can create stereotypes. They said, "I think books are like a different topic because books can give you so much on different topics... There are no right and wrongs in literature. There are only opinions and how you support them. But I think like when it comes to books... Let's say, Harry Potter... Kinda like this is BRITAIN this is Britain, this is England, this is English culture [...] I read a lot of history books, so you kinda get that stereotypical view of other cultures [...] For example, I remember the first book I read about the crusades for example... A historical event... And suddenly you have fallen into this trap of the entire Middle East is this, and [...] The European western tradition is this... And that is not right at all." Here the Participant One reflects on how non-fictional texts can often create stereotypical imagery of an entire culture. But as they reflect, literature is not all-encompassing when it comes to the truth of the narrative. It is instead focused on telling the truth that is inherent in the literary work itself. Here one can interpret the respondent to present the paradox that factual literature often suggests an all-encompassing and one-sided representation of culture under the banner of being a factual book. This phenomenon is the result of the Western media being the producers of accepted "knowledge." As a result, marginalized communities experience epistemological violence.

Finding 2, fictional literature containing more authenticity than factual works

Participant Two attributes their personal development to the insight that literature provides. They said the following, "when the author is [...] from those different cultures, you get an inside perspective [...] Because [...] it's very real, you know, it's not fake. It's not just an article or something you read on the internet." Here, the participant presents the interesting paradox: the idea that fictional literature is more accurate than factual literature, which Participant One also discussed earlier. Additionally, Participant One addressed the importance of narrative instead of the artificial or unnatural structure of a factual book. They said, in "a factual book the story is artificial [...] I remember we received these CDs, in VGS... And we, you know like, listened to it [...] and it sounds fake, and it sounds boring. And I think that is the main issue." Here the respondent discusses how factual books fail at engaging readers and ultimately fail as an educational tool for teaching about culture. Additionally, the participant argues for utilizing fictional literature as a supplement to the factual texts.

Moreover, this was also something Participant Three mentioned in their interview. When asked if culture should be taught through oral presentations or literature, they said, "a

combination of the 2, but I think that the literature aspect is incredibly important... And that is what will give students a sense of ownership, a sense of compassion... Ehmmm, the opportunity to put yourself into someone else's shoes into another situation you would never meet... Culture, it can be presented through literature in such a meaningful and valuable way.” Here Participant Three reflects on the power of narrative and its ability to insert people in the character's shoes and how powerful that experience can be in an educational setting, especially when it comes to understanding ideas of ethnic-cultural ‘otherness.’

Finding 3, development of skills in working with literature

The personal development of Participant Two extended to the overall knowledge of other cultures that the student achieved and their attitudes and relations to intercultural literature in general. Prior to the course, the student said, “It’s like I said earlier, I was very narrow with the literature that I read before.” Thus, the course changed how they approached literature as a whole, opening them up to other types of literature and not just Norwegian, British and American literature. After the course, the student sees themselves as more open, interested, and actively seeking other perspectives of literature, where previously it was either something they purposely avoided or unintentionally ignored. Furthermore, one can also trace the student’s development in terms of skills, as mentioned earlier. “For me, it wasn’t until I got to university and we started to analyze these books at like a deeper level. And you apply that sort of thing [...] to everything like to music and films”. What the participant is discussing here is the development and improvement of skills of analysis, interpretation, and interaction.

The development of other skills can also be seen in Participant Three, who said, “I was very curious, I was fascinated [...] I immediately wanted to learn about it, so I did every single book on the syllabus [...], and as I sort of dived deeper into that material, I felt that I had that I could put it into other contexts than just literature. I felt that my historical [...] knowledge [...] increased. I became more curious, more questions arised, I became skeptical to other things”. Here Participant Three is discussing the development of their skills of discovery. The way the respondent frames their narrative imagery through a timeline development indicates that they view their encounters with the literature as a progression where they had improved in the areas they describe.

4.3 Participant Three's core theme: Broadening of perspective, insight, and cultural awareness

Finding 1, change of interest and perception.

Participant Three stated, “broadening of perspective, insight, and cultural awareness” as their core theme. The respondent noted that the syllabus literature was a way for them to discover these cultures that they were not fully familiar with and a way for them to view and feel differently about them. An example of this would be how the literature and the course gave them an entirely new perspective regarding Native Americans. The respondent had previously been to America and lived there for a short period and observed some of the older Native American settlements from before the European colonizers arrived on the continent. Based on these experiences, the student got the impression that the Native Americans of modern times still lived as they did before the arrival of European colonizers. Furthermore, when living in the U.S., they visited a town close to an old Native American settlement and overheard some of the prejudice and racism aimed toward the First Nation people living there. However, they did not fully understand why the Americans were so prejudiced against the indigenous population. They said, “coming into that class that day, my pre-existing knowledge on this matter was... Limited... I had seen with my own eyes some very [...] natural, raw, I don't want to use the word... Primitive, but it sort of comes to mind (Chuckle) [...] it was nothing like a big settlement, it was just like a small... Cave-like [...] place where probably a small number of people lived, maybe ten people, and so that was my idea of Native Americans [...] probably before Seventeenth Hundred. Yeah, probably that is what I thought. ‘That they lived scattered, like that.’” After the student read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, they uncovered through the literature that Native Americans live modern lives with modern technology, thus changing their previous notion of the culture and people as the result of reading literature. In addition, the book presented them with many of the social issues plaguing the Native American communities throughout the United States, like poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, below-average educational offerings, and racism.

It should be noted that the student was partially familiar with some of these issues. However, they were not aware of how destructive and wide-reaching the social issues were within Native American communities. Moreover, as the student says, “it didn't make me consider this in a different way, but it made me feel more about it.” The literature thus changed the participant's perception about stereotypes which was the case earlier with Participant One and Two. Still,

it also changed their attitudes, making them feel more intensely on the subject regarding First Nation peoples. That said, the participant was still very empathetic towards the Native Americans as a whole, and the overall narrative tone was that of admiration and respect. In fact, the interviewee's narrative tone was dominated by the critique of colonial powers and the empathy towards the marginalized minorities.

Finding 2, change of position

However, the literature not only changed how strongly the student felt about specific issues and topics but also what position they had on the issue. After the respondent read *Things Fall Apart*, their attitude towards Christian missionaries drastically changed from what they had been before reading the book. As the student themselves says, "I remember reading *Things Fall Apart*, and after reading that, I did not feel very friendly towards missionaries who travel to [...] Africa to spread the good word". The interviewee came from a Christian background and had family friends who were missionaries. They were raised to believe that the spread of Christianity through missionary travels was a noble pursuit to be admired throughout their childhood. This change of attitude can thus be said to be a drastic progression and development. Here, the interviewee's narrative tone is characterized by a fit of almost passionate anger when thinking about the subject, indicating that they care deeply about it. The treatment of native Africans when colonial powers enforced their rule not only through military conquest but also through ideological influences like religious conversion was a topic that still resonated with the respondent. This reflection also feeds into something the respondent reflected on later in the interview. They said, "We talked about epistemological violence [...] how you sort of force your way of viewing the world unto different people or on to different people, or on to a completely different culture [...] in sort of pushing your own culture, beliefs, your values, pretty much down their throats if I can say it like that [...] And... That was shocking to me". Here the student discusses how their teacher highlighted these issues to them, and that the literature made it real for them. As they also said later in the same section "all these different terms that came alive to me sort of through the literature." Thus, the fictional literature made these issues more real to them even though they already knew about them from factual texts from earlier. This strange paradox was also some of the findings discussed earlier in Participant Two's core theme. The fact that the narrator uses this strong idiom in their narrative imagery is an indication that issues they learned about through the literary work are still something they care about strongly, even two years after working with the course and the syllabus. Moreover, their use of academic-specific vocabulary in their

imagery suggests that the course and the literature had a long-lasting effect on how they talk about the subject. How the respondent uses the word epistemological violence is an excellent example of this.

Finding 3, the concern of how literature can be interpreted to enforce stereotypes

Another thing of interest is Participant Three's discussion on how intercultural literature can have the opposite effect. Here the participant mentions reading *The Whale Rider* and not liking it. The respondent concludes that the literary work could be dangerous by reinforcing stereotypes due to the book's mythical and fantastic nature. As the interviewee said, "*Whale Rider* I felt probably, could potentially do more damage [...] I think that is a damaging book if you want to enlighten kids, and you want them to gain a greater perspective". The interviewee reflects on how the book is potentially "offensive" where the narrative revolves around certain tribal stereotypes. The most damning criticism the participant identifies in the book is that because it is a children's book, the kids who read it will have difficulties distinguishing and understanding that certain portrayals in the book are not representative of the Maori community. This opinion was also something the respondent found that many people had on the internet, which ultimately comforted them and, in their eyes, made the critique more valid. Here, the narrative tone is critical but mainly driven out of concern rather than just a distaste for the literary work itself. The narrator's use of "damaging" creates an imagery of the potential threat of misinterpretation.

Nevertheless, the criticism is a bit misplaced since *The Whale Rider* is an intercultural literary work written by an author from the Maori community, which further legitimizes it as a voice in the intercultural discourse. This type of criticism should ultimately be questioned. After all, who are we to criticize an indigenous person's narrative? This criticism is especially poignant since the participant nor I belong to the Maori community. As a result, we lack any meaningful insight into the culture aside from that granted to us through mass media. Criticism against a literary work like *The Whale Rider* should mainly come from the marginalized people who wrote the literary work in the first place. It possible that in light of books like *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is a book that de-emphasizes the mysticism of native people, a novel like *The Whale Rider* would appear to undermine that goal in the eyes of the respondent. Trying to de-mystify certain native people is an admirable goal, considering how literature and the media at large tend to over-emphasize the spiritual aspects of specific native populations. Furthermore, it is essential to remember that there are significant differences

between the history and situations of native people in The United States and New Zealand. Nonetheless, the discourse of de-mystification of native people is a discourse that should be left to native communities.

Finally, Participant Three's critique also feeds into what Participant One reflected on earlier when they mentioned Harry Potter as a literary work that creates an all-encompassing ideal of British culture. It should be noted that the participant is correct in their Criticism, however probably not in the way they intended. In the participant's statement, it appears as if they are critical to the stereotypical portrayal of British people and that they are harmful to ethnic Brits. Regarding this first interpretation, it is essential to remember that there is a power imbalance at play here which means that stereotypes are more damaging to marginalized communities than for most ethnic-cultural Brits. Therefore, this point is not particularly poignant since it is a case of privileged Brits portraying other privileged Brits. However, there is a strong argument that Britain's stereotypical representations in Harry Potter are damaging to British people who are members of marginalized communities. These people are either invisible or hurtfully caricatured in the Harry Potter books due to the homogenous and idealized portrayal of British society.

4.4 Unifying core themes and findings with research questions

Firstly, the narrative tone of the interviews can be described as different and varying between the interview subjects. As expected within the individual interviews themselves, the narrative style also varies depending on the topic and question of the interview. However, one common feature of all the interviews is that they all appear to be earnest and serious, despite the occasional polite laugh or chuckle. Secondly, each respondent utilizes unique imagery. The only common feature that one can attribute to all of the interviews is the abundance of similes the respondents use when expressing themselves, primarily when reflecting on the implications and the use of literature.

Furthermore, all interviewees use a vocabulary that is characterized by the interview subjects' academic background. Therefore, we can infer that the literature and the course influenced their academic language. Thirdly, when it comes to the themes for interviews, it is important to distinguish between the themes the narrated self believes in during the interview and the

researcher's identified themes in the transcript post-interview. This concept is reflected in the questions regarding core themes (appendix, p. 91). The narrated self in this instance is the interviewees, and unsurprisingly each of them stated different themes for their literary and cultural experience. That said, there are many parallels between the interviews. Based on the similarities of the various statements between the respondents, the overall theme that can be identified in the transcripts is the broadening of horizons. The literature for all respondents was a mind opener. It unlocked a door to a world that was utterly unknown to them. The door in this instance is the minority voices that are generally ignored or distorted in popular Western media and fiction. After reading, they were aware of these minority voices who presented post-colonial issues. Awareness of these issues made them reassess the Western cultural hegemony. Thus reading intercultural literature can be said to have increased the readers' overall cultural awareness.

Going back to the research questions, we can see that the interviews have enough data to answer them comprehensively. The first research question: *How does a reader's preconceived notion of otherness change after reading intercultural literature?* The answer to this question consists of numerous findings across the different interviews. First off, one can argue that reading intercultural literature made the interviewees more empathic to the 'other' culture and its people. The idea that the 'other' culture was vastly different from their own became significantly reduced. The literature gave the culture a voice through its characters which made it appear authentic. Intercultural literature was able to foster empathy in a way that was more real than any factual text the participants had read before. Factual literature often presents itself in a too generalized and abstract manner that does not represent the culture and people accurately.

Moreover, these factual texts are often not written by that culture, which always presents these cultures from an outsider's perspective. This type of literature thereby distorts ideas of 'otherness' that literature written by the 'other' culture can correct. Fictional literature written by authors from marginalized cultures allows the reader to get an inside perspective through the work's narrative. Hence, the sum of the story is to suspend the readers' disbelief long enough for them to imagine that the character they are reading about could be them. This disbelief creates empathy for the characters and, as a result, the culture as a whole.

With research question 2, which was: *In what manner does reading literature contribute to better intercultural competence in the reader?* There are also multiple dimensions to cover.

Firstly, reading literature allows for better intercultural competence through increasing the reader's knowledge of said culture. Through the literary work, the reader gathers cultural knowledge from an inside perspective that can be used in any intercultural exchange with or without said culture. Secondly, reading the literary work affected the readers' attitudes and perceptions of said culture. For some, it was about deconstructing a stereotype. For others, it was a change of mindset where they cared more about the culture and cultural issues. These are rooted in how the literature served as an eye-opener for the students. The literature achieved this by presenting issues they did not know about or they had some knowledge about in a new light.

Finally, reading the literature allowed for the development of skills through repeated engagement with the literary work. Furthermore, intercultural literature helped facilitate the readers' ICC skills like the skill of interpretation. Like reading in general, any reading in a second language helps to promote the reader's interpretation skill. Moreover, this interpretation also relates to analyzing the social and cultural phenomena within the literary work, where the reader uses pre-existing knowledge to make sense of it.

5. Discussion

This discussion is framed by the central findings of each interview, though this framing device is much less rigorous than in the analysis chapter. The aim here is to assess these findings and their implications in relation to the theoretical framework of the thesis. The purpose of this is to see if the results support or contradict the concepts from the theory section. The first section of the discussion reflects on the societal implications and consequences of specific findings. The focus here is how exclusion in literature or derivative inclusion can be harmful to how we view minorities. This issue is linked with what the respondents said about how they view their own as well as others' cultural backgrounds.

Later on, the discussion seeks to evaluate why narratives are best suited for teaching about culture and why factual texts tend to come up short-handed in this regard. This section also discusses how cultures and countries are often presented in textbooks, the consequences of these presentations, and the link between textbook representations and the interviews.

Much of the discussion also revolves around the didactical implication of certain findings and the numerous approaches to teaching culture through literature in school. This section also discusses the multiple possibilities and limitations of using literature in the classroom and how certain limitations can be circumvented.

5.1 The affirmation of identity and the dangerous consequences of one-sided portrayals and exclusion in literature

Going back to the central findings in Participant One's interview, we can see that representation done right can have crucial implications for understanding one's own and other people's identities. We can also see that representation done wrong can have severe consequences for the ways we view other people and cultures. This by becoming the 'other' culture and people. The idea that the student could not find literature that resonated with them mirrors some of the central points that Chimamanda Adichie talks about in her TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009). In the presentation, the author talks about growing up in Eastern Nigeria. During her childhood, she only read Western and white literature, which resulted in her loss of cultural identity. This story also draws many parallels with what

Respondent One also said in their interview in how they saw literature as a medium not representing them. She exemplifies this by how her earliest writing only featured white characters talking and doing activities strongly linked with living in the northern hemisphere, such as playing in the snow. This example speaks volumes about how we as children are vulnerable to the influence of the media we consume. She discusses how the discovery of African literature saved her by affirming her identity through representation in literature. This discovery proved that the notion of literature as a white medium was demonstrably false (Ted, 2009). Again, we see the same development or narrative in Participant One, who through literature, discovered that there was not only a place for them in society at large but also a place in literature. As a result, one can argue that their feeling of 'otherness' became reduced due to identity affirmation through literature.

The idea of the single story not only extends to representation but perception. This concept is something that Adichie discusses when she tells the story of her arrival in America and how she was faced with stereotypes of Africans, such as not being able to use a stove and listening to African tribal music. She concludes that if she had grown up in the west, she too would have fallen into the same trap of thinking of Africa in the same way as many other Westerners. This perception is the result of how the media portrays Africa with a single narrative. She reflects that she also holds notions of stereotypical perceptions of other cultures despite having dealt with stereotypes all her life. For instance, when she arrived in the US, her perception of Mexicans was that they were hardworking destitute immigrants. When she came to Mexico, she saw that these people lived full lives and that Mexican identity was a lot more than the idea of an impoverished migrant worker. She concludes that this is the result of how Mexicans are portrayed with a single story and that this rings true for Africans as well. The media's narrative is that Africa is a beautiful continent with exotic flora and fauna with an impoverished population fighting endless wars and sickness, needing white saviors to get back on the road towards success (TED, 2009)

The idea that the stories we tell about another culture are crucial in how we view said culture could also be seen in Participant Three's interview. Here their entire perception of Native Americans was based on the narrative of the tribal people living simple lives. This perception was the result of the dominant depictions of Native Americans in mass media. By reading literature, Participant Three's knowledge of First Nations peoples became broader and less dominated by the single narrative of Native Americans as the 'other' culture. The study by

Lee (2013) also had a similar finding where the participants' view of America was broader and less dominated by the single narrative of the United States (Lee, 2013, p. 145-146).

How cultures and countries are presented in the media seeps into how we view these cultures. Adichie reflects on how the West's perception of Africa is tied to colonial ideas of Africa and how they are directly connected with Western literature in the last 500 years, starting with John Locke (1632-1704). John Locke described the indigenous Africans as savages without the intellectual capability to build houses for themselves. This account further went into a fantastical territory by describing the native population as monstrous with heads located in their abdominal area (TED, 2009). The idea of associating the unknown and far-flung places of the world with monstrosities is an ancient one. Since ancient times, the people who write stories about these 'other' places have always described them as containing horrifying creatures and monstrous people. These descriptions are tied into how people attach and project their inner fears into hideous creatures. In the case of these monstrous characterizations of indigenous populations, the fear of the unknown and the underlying anxiety about what lies on the periphery of our known world and the potential danger that these distant places hold (Asma, 2009, p. 36-38).

The single stories of other people and culture thereby enforce and maintain stereotypes about said people and culture. This process contributes to their 'othering.' Despite how seemingly harmless some of these stereotypes might seem, it could indeed be argued that they can reinforce negative perceptions of other people regardless. This idea is something comedian Hari Kondabolu explores in his documentary *The Problem with Apu* (2017). In the film, Kondabolu discusses how his classmates would make fun of him based on the actions of *The Simpsons* (1989-) character Apu. The character is supposed to represent the average Indian immigrant by relying on overtly stereotypical characteristics. Kondabolu is an Indian American who was repeatedly made fun of over the years due to this portrayal. A portrayal he had no control over and is something the comedian felt had weighed on him over the years. In the film, the comedian discusses that a lot of the jokes aimed at him were mainly derived from the character's accent. In this way, the film touches on the idea of stereotypes as an accent. Apu's accent is especially problematic when considering that the pronunciation was also not derived from actual Indians. Instead, it came from the stereotypical idea of how Indian people sound when they speak English. The construction of Apu's accent was thereby another case of Western perception dominating the narrative of how marginalized people are perceived. Not only was the character written solely by white screenwriters, but he was also voiced by a

white actor. The character thereby failed at displaying any authentic diversity and only added to the constructed representation of South Asians in the media (BBC, 2017).

However, the accent is not the only problematic aspect of the character. The character embodies certain stereotypes of Indians, such as the fact that the character is in an arranged marriage, has eight kids and works as a supermarket manager. One of the fundamental issues of Apu's portrayal is that for a long time in American media, Apu was the only South Asian character on American television. Additionally, the character becomes even more problematic considering the show's young audience. One could argue that many of the people who were kids during the nineties got their idea of what Indians and South Asian people were through the Simpsons, which affected how they came to view South Asians as adults. During his childhood, Kondabolu accepted the harassment due to wanting to fit in with his white classmates. This testimony is an excellent example of internalized racism in action. Here the individual degrades themselves so that they can adhere to overarching social norms and values. The reason why Apu got a pass for such a long time is connected to how the character was a soft stereotype, meaning that the portrayal of the character is not inherently malicious like how African American were portrayed in the media in the early half of the twentieth century. Soft stereotypes are thereby closely related to the idea of implicit stereotypes, the ones that individuals carry despite being unconscious of their presence (BBC, 2017). These stereotypes thereby become a part of our language and how we think of different cultures and ethnic groups. The only antidote to these toxic stereotypes is the actual and authentic representation of minorities in the media through literature.

The idea of accents as stereotypes was also touched upon by the respondent in interview two. Here they discussed how their perception of Iranians before reading *Persepolis* (2007) was mainly based on stereotypes and their accent. Their lack of knowledge, I do think, was the result of a lack of exposure or representation of Iranian culture aside from brief comedic stereotypes in fictional media and negative news coverage. What they discuss in the interview regarding past stereotypes is instead the result of a much larger and underlying issue that is directly connected to how minorities are portrayed in the media. In these stereotypes, how a character speaks and how they are perceived is solely related to their minority background. The heart of the issue here is that stereotypes represent non-specific and broad, archetypal stereotypes that can be used for multiple cultures and people.

Consequently, these stereotypes become the only association and knowledge people have about multiple different cultures and people. Concerning Participant Two, one could therefore assume that “those stereotypes” that they mention about how they viewed Iran prior to reading *Persepolis* resulted from broad and non-specific stereotypes about Middle Easterners in general. Though the respondent does not explicitly say it, one can assume that the stereotypes are more expansive than just pertaining to accents. It is possible that the accents they mention are simply one example of the stereotypes they had in mind. For instance, stereotypes regarding religious extremism and terrorism are quite common in relation to the Middle East regardless of cultural specifics. The dominance of these stereotypes results in establishing a single story where one narrative of the Middle East becomes the only narrative. For instance, the political situation in countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq are vastly different from one another.

Nevertheless, from the Western viewpoint, the stereotype of Islamic terrorists dominates the entire Middle East. The single narrative of the middle east is rooted in the contentious economic and political relationship between various Middle Eastern countries and the West. These issues have resulted in literature and the media solely focusing on these issues, thereby painting a distorted portrait of the Middle East where terrorism is the only narrative. For instance, the media’s depiction of events such as the Iran hostage crisis and the Iranian regime’s support of Hezbollah’s nuclear ambitions have shaped how we view Iran in the West. The issue here is not that these aspects of Iran are not valid. Instead, the problem is that these representations become our only association with the country and culture. This distorted media representations and how it shapes people’s mindsets are similar to that discussed by Alter (2013, p. 151-153) in her article regarding Native Americans.

Going back to Adiche, another issue she touched upon in her presentation is the idea of true ethnic authenticity. Across different cultures, we can see that people who do not conform to certain social norms and values are met with sanctions like an invalidation of the individual’s identity and exclusion from social participation (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 144-152). Again, this phenomenon goes back to Participant One’s interview where they discussed not feeling like they belonged to neither majority culture nor minority culture. Hybrid cultural backgrounds are generally invalidated due to dominant cultures inserting themselves over minority cultures by gatekeeping and restricting membership and participation. By limiting full cultural integration with criteria like exclusive ethnic background and a single set of cultural values, the individual will have difficulties participating in cultural integration (Schieffloe, 2011, p.

159-162). The result of this is the feeling of alienation which was the case for Participant One. Cultural gatekeeping also includes validating people outside their cultural sphere. This idea is something Adiche discusses in her Ted talk in relation to how someone who read one of her early works criticized it for not being African enough. They criticized this aspect of the work because they felt they understood Africa better than Adichie due to how it was framed through the media. Not including stereotypical depictions like poverty was therefore seen as lacking the essential African authenticity. Instead, Adichie's work contained middle-class people living ordinary lives. Adichie concludes that stories have immense power in how we view and interact with the world. How Africa is perceived in the west is the result of the Western narrative about Africa. As Adichie says, it starts with how the narrative begins with the failure of the African state and not the damaging consequences of being colonial states (TED, 2009). These stories are essential because we as people link them with all-encompassing ideas of how the world is. Thus, the narrative of failure becomes the story of Africa as a whole, thereby creating stereotypes.

Adichie says that the problem of stereotypes is not that they are not true but instead that they are incomplete. This statement feeds into what Participant One discussed in their interview regarding how they had similarities to stereotypes regarding their own ethnicity. For instance, many Nigerians have indeed experienced political oppression, including Adiche herself. Regardless they live whole interesting lives under these circumstances where they can achieve success. Presenting successful stories is therefore essential if viewpoints and perceptions are to be balanced. Only emphasizing issues in the portrayal of Africa in the media and literature explicitly reinforces the differences between people and not the similarities. In other words, depictions like these reinforce ideas of 'otherness.' Furthermore, this type of singular depiction of people in fiction and non-fiction results in undermining cultural identity as well as personal identity. For instance, due to the immense media coverage of illiteracy in many sub-Saharan African, there is a general perception that Nigerians do not read books. Adiche's goal is not to stop covering these issues in literature and the news but to bring to light that we all have the responsibility to portray Africa fairly by presenting both the positive and negative. Ultimately, Adiche concludes that stories have both the power to dehumanize and humanize people (TED, 2009).

Therefore, stories must deal with a broader set of representations that we can all find within our lives. We need stories that feature characters who showcase more individual variation than explicit cultural expressions. General cultural expressions are key traits of culture like

language, knowledge, values, and norms. Furthermore, this includes more unique customs that can be found within the culture (Schiefloe, 2011, p. 162). The literature selected for the classroom must include a representation of distinctive and alternative cultural features. Distinctive and alternative cultural features are cultural traits that are unique to specific groups and members of society. These are determined by categorization and cultural dividers like sex, gender, ethnicity, religious and political beliefs, and subcultural participation (Schiefloe, 2011, p. 163-164). Without including these cultural representations in our literature, our and others' identities are devalued. This literary exclusion thereby results in the domination of the single narrative. By reading inclusive literature about other cultures, we get an opportunity to educate ourselves and others in a way that contributes to our intercultural competence. As the interviews found, the attitude and knowledge component of ICC is what could potentially change by reading this type of literature. By reading a more diverse and inclusive form of literature, the reader would be subjected to new knowledge about other cultures and societies. This increased inclusion of people would result in a change of attitude later on, as we saw with the participants. This idea of exposure as a method for developing knowledge is also reflected in the curriculum. Here it stated, "Working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils' knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as their insight into ways of living, ways of thinking and traditions of indigenous peoples." (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c).

It is important to preface that though inclusion in literature is a desirable goal, inclusion for inclusion's sake, commonly referred to as a tokenism, is to be avoided. These symbolic efforts for diversity can be damaging because it emphasizes that racial and cultural inclusion are solely based on appearances alone. One can argue that there are numerous examples of token characters in the Harry Potter books. Many of the non-white characters are given little characterization outside of the fact that they are members of marginalized groups. For instance, the character Cho Chang is given little characterization or representation throughout the novels that would entail her Chinese British cultural background. Instead, the diversity lies in the name alone. A name that paradoxically consists of two Korean surnames (Fowler, 2021).

The inclusion of a non-white character would indicate that the character was added to address an underlying lack of diversity without actual authentic representation. This type of representation stands in stark contrast with literary works such as *Persepolis* (2007), which contextualizes the cultural and ethnical depictions through a personal narrative. Again, one could argue that these token representations completely distort or ignore the importance of

identity in representing POC or other marginalized people. As Adiche (2009) presents in her TED talk, the heart of the issue is that we as people collectively associate fictional characters and non-fictional characters with that character's culture and ethnicity. These characters inadvertently become an official representation of the cultures or ethnicities. Due to this associative link, we have to be aware of how people are represented and the consequences of that representation.

On the one hand, one could criticize this link between fictional characters and their association with more significant cultures and people. From this, we can conclude that we should all be more critical when dealing with fictional characters and that fictional characters are fictional. On the other hand, fictional characters often try to say something about the world around us and portray something inherently real. The line between what is real and not is therefore highly unclear. Therefore, the argument that we can all come to a reasonable conclusion of the fictionality and factuality of the portrayals of other cultures is not valid. Furthermore, there is no way to know how many people can accurately distinguish and evaluate these characters' cultural validity. The ability to separate fact from fiction is very much dependent on the individual and their knowledge of other cultures and people. However, we know that this link becomes even more important to young and impressionable minds who have yet to see the nuances of the wider world. As a result, kids tend to accept these portrayals at face value.

In some cases, the only identifiable characteristic of the character is their ethnicity or cultural background and not their personality or history. The nuances of cultural knowledge, language, norms, and values and how people interact with these facets of culture in society are obscured with simplistic portrayals in literature and other media. This simplification is at the core of what Adiche talks about in her TED talk, the idea that only one facet of your culture and history is visible to the wider world. It is also one of the central findings in the interview that a particular feature dominated the participants' perception of other cultures. This finding can be a serious issue because these characters can reinforce stereotypes that can negatively affect young people's perception of the world. As the interviews found, the antidote to this is reading intercultural literature with a broad representation of the cultures that the narrative revolves around. For example, only focusing on the political oppression of Iranians in the media and literature will leave us with the impression that Iranian identity is defined by being oppressed by the regime. *Persepolis* (2007) shifts the focus away from that aspect of Iranian life by presenting a narrative of childhood and adolescence in Iran. Satrapi (2007) shows us what daily life was like for her and introduces us to interesting and unique stories such as acquiring

Western rock music through contraband dealers. Such fascinating minute details tell us a lot more about life under these circumstances than mass media's overt focus on political prosecution. Using a literary work like *Persepolis* (2007) to teach about culture in this way would thereby feed into the English subject curriculum's core elements. Here it is stated, "By reflecting on, interpreting, and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society." (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c).

In other cases, the identity aspect of the fictional character's cultural or ethnic background and the subsequent sociopolitical context is invisible to the overarching narrative. These portrayals can be dangerous because it undermines many of the issues marginalized people have to face daily such as systematic racism. Furthermore, it undermines personal identity, resulting in a social disconnect between people with minority backgrounds and the larger cultural majority. This idea is what we can see in Participant One's interview, where due to a lack of representation in fiction, the respondent felt like they did not belong, that society at large did not have a place for someone like them. For the individual, it could lead to internalized racism and anger. Other times, that anger could also be directed at society since it enforces the mentality of us versus them.

5.2 The realism of narrative and the artificiality of the factual text

Going back to the findings in Participant Two's interview, we discovered that fictional literature feels more accurate than factual texts, which claim to be more accurate than fiction. This paradox is ultimately rooted in two different causes. The first is the narrative's power over understanding the world, and the second is the epistemological fallacy of many factual texts regarding culture.

The only natural way to contextualize social phenomena such as norms, customs and values in the classroom is through literature. The exceptions to this are diverse and inclusive classrooms where minority students can share their experiences and ideas in an educational setting. However, the majority of Norwegian classrooms are culturally homogenous. As a result, the students need to use literature to get a first-hand account of different cultures. Where

literature has the ability to put you in the shoes of someone in that particular circumstance and show you these phenomena, the factual text can only tell you about them. And how else is one supposed to understand a culture or social phenomena without understanding it first-hand through that specific culture's viewpoint. An empathic connection to the characters in a literary work is required to uncover the mindset and how they interact with the culture.

On the other hand, Factual literature primarily presents itself through disembodied and impersonal facts about different cultures and people, which does not allow us to go in-depth into the 'other' culture. Instead, we are left with a surface-level understanding. Factual literature simply does not suffice for understanding 'otherness' due to factual texts' inability to empathically understand specific aspects of culture. The factual approach focuses only on the larger structural differences between cultures that completely ignore the individual and how they interact with their own culture as well as other cultures. As Byram (1997) discusses, one should always consider the individual and the construction of their own cultural identity when learning about culture.

Furthermore, it is this approach that teachers should strive towards when teaching in the classroom. The earlier deficit model used to teach culture for the first half of the past century is too outdated to be used in modern classrooms. The approach is dominated by underlining ethnocentric ideas and values. The cultural styles approach, a relativistic view of culture, is also not adequate in our modern classrooms. This approach over-emphasizes the surface-level cultural features, reinforcing stereotypes despite trying to be neutral in the overall view of the culture. A cultural-historical approach that is focused on individual participation in cultural activities and identity formation is the most ideal for the modern classroom. By utilizing time as a factor for how social norms, values and ideas are influenced, the students can learn about how cultures and their features such as norms, knowledge, and values are dynamic (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

The unique ability literature has to put the reader into these characters' mindsets and foster empathy is rooted in narrative construction. We as people create narratives to help us structure and give meaning to the world around and inside of us. Or as Howitt says when describing the purpose of the field of narrative analysis, "we create our 'self' using narratives and stories to account for what has happened or what is happening to us" (2016, p. 366). For example, when we tell people about our lives, we do so in the form of a story. When we tell 'our' story, we

talk about the people we grew up with and the events we experienced since these are all essential components in creating who we are as a person.

One could therefore make the argument that factual texts such as biographies would work for the purpose since they revolve around the construction of narrative. Many of the literary works from the syllabus that the participants read were either partly biographical or firmly based on the author's experiences. For instance, *Persepolis* (2007) is unquestionably a biographical work written in the form of a graphic novel about growing up in Iran in the 80s and returning to the country after a long absence. The book is similar to that of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (2003), which means that certain events within the story are stylized in a fictitious way without breaking from the story's realism. An excellent example of this stylization can be found in *Persepolis* (2007), where Marjane overhears friends of the family discussing the torture and killing of a political prisoner. In this scene, the dismembered body is portrayed as hollow similar to that of a ragdoll which emphasizes the idea of the child's perspective on this horrible event (Satrapi, 2007, p. 52). The overlap of fact and fiction is also something Marjane, the author of *Persepolis*, discusses in an interview with Movie Web (2010). In the interview, she discusses how certain parts of the graphic novel are modified for narrative purposes to tell a good story. She instead describes the work as inspired by her own experiences instead of entirely representative of everything she experienced. Finally, she discusses in the interview that telling a story is always done so through a subjective lens and that this also applies to other self-proclaimed factual media like documentaries (Movie Web, 2010). The hybridity of realism and factuality also runs through *The Absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian* (2007), which was based on the author's own experiences with growing up in an impoverished Native American community. Though the characters are fictional, they are based on people the author met during his adolescence. Considering this form of hybridity between factuality and fictionality, one should be critical of such absolute distinctions. We should therefore make the distinction between narrative and non-narrative literary works. This type of overlap is also reflected in how biographies and memoirs are often lumped in with fiction in libraries and bookstores. However, the fact still stands that a large portion of factual texts are non-narrative, especially the textbooks found in upper secondary school. Exclusively utilizing these books when teaching about cultures, which is the case for many upper secondary students, is a massive disservice to the English subject and curriculum. Going back to interview one, we can see the respondent discussing how ethnocentrism is unintentionally promoted through factual history books. Factual history books are often too reductive in their approach to representing

historical events and other cultures. These books often overgeneralize cultural traits, removing the nuances found within them. The issue with this is that these factual books become the narrative instead of one of many narratives, which again leads to a singular story. History is exceptionally complex and certain events are the result of multiple factors that lead to the outcome that is referred to as history. Using the same argument as Adichie discusses in her presentation regarding how stories are framed in relation to present-day marginalized cultures, we can also discuss historical events and cultures in much the same way. For instance, when discussing Native Americans, do we start with the story of how the arrows were fired at colonists, or do we begin with the conquering of Native American land? (TED, 2009).

As stated in the introduction, the English curriculum opens up for the use of numerous literary types. Additionally, the curriculum does not restrict teachers from primarily using coursebooks for English teaching. However, in reality, most English teachers overly rely on English textbooks as their primary reading material, with few exceptions (Stuvland, 2019, p. 238). These course books are mainly comprised of inauthentic texts constructed explicitly for English teaching in the classroom. These texts are known as pedagogical texts. Texts that are not created with the aim of teaching English are known as authentic texts since they present an actual and practical utilization of the English language (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 288-289). We can infer by the fact that coursebooks are the primary reading material in English class, that inauthentic texts, by extension, are the most used texts in Norwegian classrooms. This overreliance on pedagogical texts is concerning considering the underlying artificiality that is present throughout them. These texts often present unnatural situations for real-world English usage that have little relevance for the student's application of English outside the classroom. Going back to interview one, we can see the respondent's emphasis on "fake" texts and how this results in literature failing as an education tool. This idea of "fake" texts also applies to pedagogical texts and they certainly as a result of their artificiality, fail as an educational tool to some degree. It should be noted that I do not want to give the impression that pedagogical texts have no value. My emphasis here is that the overreliance on them is a serious issue that should be corrected in the future. If the purpose of the English subject, as stated in the curriculum, is to prepare students by giving them "the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f), then there is a solid argument to be made that pedagogical texts are more inept when it comes to preparing students for real-world usage of the English language. By mainly relying on inauthentic texts provided by the course books,

the students are presented with a textual context that warps or shelters the students from actual usage of English. Ultimately, this results in the pragmatic potential of English being significantly reduced due to how it is taught in Norwegian schools.

The critique above raises the question as to why these course books do not contain more authentic texts. Of course, it should be noted that these books often include a large number of authentic texts such as excerpts from novels, interviews, and news articles. Nevertheless, the vast majority of course books are still mostly comprised of inauthentic pedagogical texts. There is a lack of authentic texts in these English textbooks due to the licensing cost of utilizing authentic English texts. When publishers and other parties are putting together course books, they have to pay a licensing and copyright fee for each authentic text they use to whoever owns the copyrighted material unless the parties involved have made a different arrangement (Åndsverkloven, 2018, § 1-15). The consequence of this is that the editors and writers of the books have to carefully consider what texts to use and how much the costs would be in relation to the potential sales of the course books. Therefore, one could argue that if the publisher's goal is maximized revenue, the creators of the book will choose to use the least amount of copyrighted authentic text material.

The issue of cost is also a serious concern to the schools who buy these course books. In general, textbooks are pretty expensive, and schools typically purchase new ones when they must and not when they can. The high cost is also exponentially increased with digital textbooks, which is why they are so underutilized in Norwegian classrooms. The digital books' steep price is linked with how digital books are updated for free through the internet, whereas the physical book requires renewed purchases for each edition. As a result, Norwegian schools tend to buy large quantities of physical books utilized for multiple classes over the years until the quality of the books reach a point where they are too worn out to be used again. The issue of cost also applies to all English literature in Norwegian classrooms and not just course books. Buying class sets of paper-based novels is relatively rare due to the fact that they are so expensive. Instead of buying new literature for students, schools will tend to use tried and tested literature that has been used numerous times before (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 309-313).

Additionally, there is the issue of woefully under-funded libraries in Norway, which only fuels the lack of new reading material in Norwegian schools. The unfortunate consequences of these issues are that Norwegian students do not experience enough diverse, varied, and new

literature. The overreliance on old literature is a potential loss of numerous students who could have been turned into lifelong English literature readers (Von Sprecken, Kim & Krashen, 2000 in; Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 387). The lofty core elements of the curriculum state, “By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus, the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c) would hence be difficult to achieve due to these limitations in the average school’s resources. If teachers are to provide the best education possible for students, they have to look for other supplementary material to achieve the variety and quality they deserve.

As stated earlier, the issue of factual texts in teaching about culture is twofold, the first being the issue of artificial text structure and the second being the epistemological fallacy of the self-proclaimed factual texts. On behalf of these epistemological issues, these factual texts have to be viewed from a post-colonial perspective. Throughout the colonial period and up to modern times, native cultures have always been written about from a Western outsider perspective through both factual and fictional literature. This fact can, in turn, be very damaging in relation to how we view native cultures and people. For instance, the name of the character Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611/2008) was inspired by the word cannibal. In turn, the character is depicted as a savage and monstrous native. The association between native populations and cannibalism was thus cemented in Western cultural discourse. Later on, we can see this idea further reinforced in literary works such as *Heart of Darkness* (1902/1973), where all natives are portrayed as cannibals. These depictions have little to do with representing reality and more to do with reinforcing racist ideologies through fiction. This is especially apparent in light of *Heart of Darkness* (1902/1973), considering how the story was inspired by Joseph Conrad’s own travels to Africa, where he never witnessed cannibalism.

Furthermore, the issue of Westerners writing about native cultures and people is not only problematic in its intent but also in relation to the method itself. The problem with writing about cultures in this manner, whether it’s from an ethnocentric perspective or a more neutral descriptive approach, is that the cultures can never truly be understood unless one has spent a lifetime within them. Our biases will unconsciously or not warp the discourse surrounding the culture, which can only result in a surface-level description. The proper depth of culture can only be understood from an insider’s perspective. Furthermore, we should also question the legitimacy of someone trying to tell and describe the stories of another culture that is not their

own. As history time and time again has proved, the intent of telling someone else's stories from a third party perspective, which the colonial powers did, is to diminish that culture. The ultimate purpose of these efforts was to justify colonizing other people by erasing their culture.

This topic is something Chinua Achebe the writer of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), discussed in an interview with the American PBS network about the 50th anniversary of the book. Achebe explains how Africa has only been told through the perspective of colonial writers throughout the majority of history. As discussed earlier, these explorers often told of primitive people and monstrous inhabitants. The voice of the native population was one to be ignored or silenced by the colonial rulers. For instance, he discusses how the native Igbo was never contextualized in light of their own culture. Thus, literature became a weapon to diminish and erase the cultural heritage of the Igbo religion by depicting it as incomprehensible faith that was far inferior to Christianity (PBS News Hour, 2008). The entire purpose of much of colonial literature was simply to portray the African people in a derogatory and dehumanizing way to justify the atrocities on the African continent.

Finally, Achebe covers that intercultural literature can resonate with people despite not being a member of that culture. This finding is something we saw across all participants in the interviews. He mentions how an all-female Korean college class wrote to him about how the book also told their stories due to the similarities between European colonization of Africa and the Japanese colonization of Korea (PBS News Hour, 2008). Therefore, one could argue that the Norwegian Sami people would also strongly resonate with the book regarding the Norwegian colonization of Sami land and the forced Christianization they were subjected to. This phenomenon is also something Participant One felt in their interview when they felt that the literature of the course told their own story in having a hybrid cultural background, despite none of the books covering their specific cultural background.

Considering this long history of undermining marginalized peoples' voices, we should all have a new look at cultural representation in the English textbooks used in Norwegian classrooms today. Many of these textbooks often include a chapter or section about the use of English around the world. These texts showcase different countries where English is an official language. These texts almost have a tourist agency approach to the countries they discuss using known landmarks and locations in the pictures attached to the texts. Generally, these texts feature surface-level facts about the country, such as population and size. Additionally, the texts often present the traditions and customs of the country. When it comes to the texts

showing different countries in Africa and Asia, these texts are generally illustrated with pictures of ‘incredible nature and wildlife,’ which emphasize their exotic nature.

The main issues regarding these texts are their relatively short length and lack of diverse representation. The lack of length results in an overall lack of depth in representing the countries and cultures they try to describe. These texts are often less than a page long, which results in the overreliance on stereotypical or exotic illustrations to make the countries visually distinguishable. By focusing on the surface level and iconographical aspect of another country and culture, the writers of these texts hope to capture the most important or noteworthy essence of said culture. The issue with this is that cultures are complex and dense, and external cultural features such as cultural expressions represent only the surface of the cultural iceberg. The core cultural content such as values, norms, and ideas that compose any given culture (Schieffloe, 2011, p. 183-184) is not adequately showcased in these texts. This approach thereby results in problematic representation, which could reinforce stereotypes such as those Adiche discussed in her Ted talk. As discussed extensively earlier, representation in fiction matters, and the same is also true when it comes to non-fiction. Therefore, we can speculate whether these textbook representations also played into how the participants viewed certain cultures prior to reading intercultural literature. The only natural alternative here for improving the text is to expand on the text size to include a broader and more diverse representation. Trying to portray a culture accurately is nearly impossible when the text format is so rigidly short.

Despite the short length of such texts being a major flaw, it does not seem likely that many of these texts will be expanded on in the future. The fact that the texts are short has a lot to do with the texts’ usage in Norwegian classrooms. English as a subject has a total of a hundred and forty hours of dedicated teaching time (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020d). That is a rough average of hundred and eighty minutes per week, which is generally split into multiple lessons, lasting anywhere from forty-five-hundred and twenty minutes. If the expectation is to finish one text per lesson, then the texts need to be short. Reading and working with one text per lesson is quite manageable if the text is as short as they often are in many of these textbooks. If coursebook texts are to expand, the overall English lesson has to expand as well. As a result, lessons have to revolve around fewer texts overall, which are worked with over an extended period. Again, this approach would open up for more use of literature and other extensive reading material in the classroom. Though one could argue that English teaching is still not optimal with the revised curriculum, there is still some significant improvement in vocational

studies. In the past curriculum, the entirety of the hundred and forty hours of dedicated teaching hours was split between grades one and two in upper secondary. This distribution meant that year one had a total of eighty-six hours while year two had a total of fifty-six hours (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013). Therefore, one could argue that short and surface-level factual texts were more prevalent in vocational studies than general studies in the past.

Concerning the second issue, the lack of diversity results from these texts being primarily written by Norwegians using sources that are also Western. In this manner, these texts are quite problematic because they, to some degree, aid in undermining and silencing marginalized voices. This ultimately adds to the cycle of Westerners trying to define the non-Western, whether they do it intentionally is intentional or not. As a result of this exclusion, the narrative surrounding marginalized people is defined mainly by Westerners. If indigenous voices were to tell their history and stories, we would epistemologically understand these cultures better than we can when written by an outsider. The fact that Norwegians write the overwhelming majority of the intercultural coursebook texts is unsurprising considering that Norway is a mostly homogeneously populated country. That said, it stands to reason that the producers of these books should hire more non-Norwegians to write the texts regarding these other countries and cultures. This allows for a different perspective that puts more emphasis on the insider's view. Another option could be outsourcing the specific text to someone with a cultural background compatible with the desired text's content. Alternatively, the producers of the course books could hire cultural consultants to review the texts and provide critical feedback that would greatly improve the texts' content. Despite how important these different approaches can be regarding enhancing the authenticity and cultural awareness of the texts, it would be naïve to believe that the creators of these coursebooks would take such precautions towards improved cultural representation for all of these texts considering the increased cost that this would entail. Regardless, even if the producers would take such measures a fraction more than they do now, that would still be a considerable improvement from where things are today. Ultimately, we should all do our best to spread awareness surrounding the lack of indigenous voices in English coursebooks and hope for more earmarked funding for inclusion and diversity.

5.3 The development of attitudes, skills, and knowledge in engagement with English literature and the many pitfalls towards ICC acquisition

Going back to the findings in interview three, we find that literature can change both someone's perspective and attitude. The ideal result of this is a change towards more cultural relativistic perspectives and open attitudes. Despite this being the most ideal and preferable outcome, there are still multiple barriers that could result in the reader deriving the opposite conclusions after reading the literature. Nevertheless, in the classroom setting, literature's potential for personal growth far outweighs the potential risks.

Using Schifloe's (2011) approach to attitude, we can see in interview three that the student's affective direction changed to a large degree after reading the literary work. In this specific incident, the student started to care more about the issues facing Native Americans. Furthermore, the student began to care more about post-colonial issues as a whole after reading just one book. Here we can see a literal change where the participant went from being aware of the history and its implication regarding the Native Americans, to being very passionate about the subject. The broader significance of this finding is that teachers can start to incorporate intercultural literature to make students care more about the issue in a classroom setting. As was discussed extensively in the previous section, literature has the ability for students to feel empathy for characters and situations that are far outside their cultural context. By inhabiting these characters through literature, the potential for creating change is greater if this approach is implemented to a larger extent in our educational system. For example, talking about the poverty and hardship of the Native American communities today will not invoke the same response as living it through literature. For instance, showing statistics, pictures, and news footage does not attach the student in a similar way to the topic. Experiencing a character from this community's daily life, on the other, allows for an emotional context where the students can attach factual information to the narrative. If students leave Upper Secondary with a greater awareness of these issues, then that positive change will carry over to whatever the students decide to in their working life.

Going back to Schifloe's (2011) approach to attitude, we can see here that the respondent's affective direction changed from positive to negative due to reading the syllabus literature. The finding that literature can change one's attitude is also similar to that found in the study by Gómez Rodrigues (2013, p. 107-108). Participant Three went from viewing the numerous

past and present Christian missionary projects in Africa as good to something potentially devastating to the native population. Here we can see the form of re-socialization known as alternation take place. The participant's social norms established by their upbringing influenced the idea that missionary projects were a force for the greater good. This perspective changed in light of new knowledge to view the projects as harmful (Byram, 1997). Viewing the legitimacy and intent of missionaries today with the same skepticism as the first Christian missionaries in Africa is a well-founded criticism. Especially when considering the consequences that these Western-funded missionary projects have had in multiple African countries in the past and today. Some have argued that there is a direct correlation between the increasingly hostile attitudes and legislation towards LGBTQ minorities in Africa, and the immense focus that American evangelist missionaries have placed on this talking point in their teachings (Smith, 2012). A report by Political Research Associates found that American religious organizations promoted homophobia in countries such as Zambia by preaching that homosexuality is an un-African practice and a sin that should be stopped. The report concluded that this type of religious doctrine is a form of new colonialism that imports homophobia from the West to Africa (Kaoma, 2012). This growing hostility can be seen in the increasingly harsher penalties for homosexuality in various parts of Africa. Many anti-LGBTQ laws are rooted in old colonial penal codes, which have been expanded since colonial independence. This is the case for countries such as Nigeria, where homosexuality has become punishable by death in some parts of the country (Amnesty International UK, 2018). One could argue that using intercultural literature regarding the subject can serve as an educating tool regarding colonization and the consequences of epistemological violence in the past and present. The teacher could teach about this subject, thereby helping the students drawing parallels between past atrocities and the continued Western exploitation of Africa today. In this way, the student would learn and touch upon the competence aim “explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

Another direct benefit of reading literature aside from the change of attitude is developing skills essential for ICC. This concept was one of the findings from Participant Two and Three’s interviews. When Participant Two discussed how they started to analyze literature in a new way after reading, we can see that this resulted from how working with literature increased their interpretation skills. An individual’s ability to analyze and interpret is one of the essential components of Byram’s (1997) skills in his model for ICC. With Participant Three, we saw

the development of the skill of discovery when they discussed how literature made them want to learn more about the subject and actively working towards learning more about it. Overall, the argument can be made that any sort of interaction with a literary work results in improving the students' skills. For instance, the student has to make sense of the literary work when they first read it, using their pre-existing knowledge of the language and subject. This type of engagement is where the ICC interpretation skill comes into play. The interesting thing here is that the course requires the students to write an essay and contribute to the class in other ways than reading. For instance, the obligatory assignment requires the students to read up on secondary literature related to the subject and utilize it a way that makes sense for the assignment. This strongly involves the skill of discovery and interaction since the reader has to discover new information and deconstruct it. The study by Lee (2013) also confirms the engagement of the skills related to intercultural competence like interaction and interpretation when students read intercultural literature (p. 142-144). Not only does literature help with furthering the students' ICC skills, but it also helps with improving fundamental skills or basic skills such as those listed in the English subject curriculum. More specifically, any form of extensive reading of English literature would result in improved reading skills (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020e).

Finally, as discussed extensively earlier, reading literature is a potent tool in improving one's knowledge concerning intercultural competence. As Byram (1997) presents, knowledge in relation to intercultural competence is divided into two separate categories. Knowledge relating to factual information about other cultures and knowledge about the communication and socialization process. Here literature can educate the readers on general information about a culture and communication style and aspects of socialization that come into play within an intercultural exchange. A good example of a literary work that touch on all of these topics particularly well is *Persepolis* (2007) and *The Absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian* (2007). Both works touch on the narrative of youth, thereby showing how our culture influences our socialization.

Furthermore, both focus on intercultural encounters and how these can play out successfully or unsuccessfully. A good example of this is how Arnold, the protagonist, was socially conditioned to respond to insults with violence. This cultural norm was viewed as shocking in the white schools in *The Absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian* (2007), and Arnold had to adapt to fit in. Literature's potential for improving knowledge concerning ICC was also confirmed in the study by Gómez Rodrigues (2013, p. 105-106).

As discussed earlier, improved ICC has implications that extend far outside of the classroom. By working with intercultural literature, the student develops their English language skills and intercultural competence. This idea is also reflected in the English subject curriculum, which states, “English shall help the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. It shall prepare the pupils for an education and societal and working life that requires English-language competence in reading, writing and oral communication.” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f). In this manner, the student is better prepared for intercultural encounters and how to communicate mindfully to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations. In light of the communication models discussed in the theory chapter, we can assess that with cultural and communicative awareness; The student can adapt and change their communication style to how the individual might interpret the message based on the influence of their cultural filter. Hence, the cultural filter is influenced by the aspects of culture such as knowledge, norms, and values. Thus, the likelihood of critical incidents is reduced overall if the student has a higher level of cultural and communication awareness. Cultural awareness extends to far more than just adapting to another culture’s communication style. Literature can change how we view culture and its member. Seeing a member of another culture in a more open-minded manner that is less dominated by stereotypes that have influenced these cultures' narrative lays a much better foundation for future communication and interaction.

Though the potential for development is immense when it comes to utilizing literature in the classroom, there is a risk that literature can contribute to negative stereotypes. This was also one of the findings of the study presented by Hecke (2013), which was discussed extensively in the theory section. Here it was found that certain types of literature could enforce stereotypes instead of undermining them. The study concluded that this was more the result of the teacher not going through the material extensively, analyzing, and discussing it. Simply put, we can never expect that all of the students will develop intercultural competence by just reading the literature. If left unmonitored, the students could use intercultural literature to anchor their stereotypes in the literature. This finding is why using this type of literature is most likely to succeed in its aims in the classroom. One could therefore argue that the students in the interview had this type of ICC development due to how their reading of the literary works was enhanced through the classroom teachings. The Importance of teacher lead presentations and discussions was also brought up by Participant Three, who discussed how their teacher helped them get a new perspective regarding the Native Americans.

Though the study presented by Hecke (2013) does not focus on the issue, it is an undeniable fact that the literature itself can have properties in its content that could reinforce certain stereotypes. Despite the author's good intentions, their literary works are not inherently a positive force when it comes to fostering attitudes of openness and tolerance. For instance, in the comic *Uncle Scrooge Adventures Vol.1: Land of the Pygmy Indians/ War of the Wendigo* by Don Rosa & Carl Barks (2007), certain stereotypes of Native Americans are amplified despite the work trying to celebrate Native American culture by depicting Western influence as the antagonist of the story. In the comic, the protagonists are tasked with protecting Native American culture from Western civilization and its destructiveness on the Natives' way of life. In some way, the protagonist's desire towards preserving Native American culture by portraying it as admirable and natural is leaps and bounds better than how past works of literature in the earlier half of the twentieth century have portrayed Native Americans as brutal savages (Alter, 2013, p. 152).

Nevertheless, the comic overly relies on stereotypical and superficial representations of Native Americans, which can be seen on the cover, depicting Native Americans wearing feathers and donning angry facial expressions (Alter, 2013, p. 152). One thing of importance here, which was discussed extensively in the previous section, is the importance of representation in the literature selection. Neither Rosa nor Barks (2007) are Native Americans, and how they depict Native Americans is once again Westerners defining 'otherness' through distorted representations. It can therefore be said that what type of intercultural material is chosen for the classroom is of great importance. When selecting intercultural material, all teachers need to assess whether or not the representation in the literary work can help develop the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes for better ICC. Furthermore, teachers need to look into who wrote the literary work and whether or not the author of the work represents the marginalized people the story centers on. Therefore, teachers should mainly use First Nation literature to ensure better and appropriate contextualization of indigenous people (Alter, 2013, p. 156).

Another potential limitation with intercultural literature is that if it fails to engage the reader, this results in them not finishing the literary work. This idea was something that Participant One discussed when they reflected on what literary works offered challenges when it came to concepts, ideas, and language in the syllabus literature. In that instance, Participant One discussed how *Things Fall Apart* did not engage them due to them not being able to relate or connect with the book on a personal level. As the participant says, "I literally cannot relate to pretty much anything from Africa." They also mentioned that the book was hard to follow as

a result of this. Ultimately, this means that when selecting literature for any educational setting, the teacher must carefully assess what literary works would be engaging. If the literature fundamentally fails at engaging the readers, any hope of fostering intercultural competence in the students is completely gone. Therefore, one could argue that the teacher should try to include intercultural literature with a broad appeal in terms of cultural relatability.

However, concerning the respondent's statement, there is a solid argument that the participant failed to connect with the literary work due to a lack of exposure to African literature and media in general. Furthermore, the respondent's statement is not that reflective considering how diverse and expansive African literature is. In reality, the student has barely scratched the surface of African literature with the few literary works featured in their syllabus. For instance, not all African literature focuses on colonialism and tribal societies. It is reasonable to assume that the student would have connected more if the literary work presented more similar circumstances to relate to, like a middle-class student attending high school. If anything, the respondent's claim should signal that all students should be exposed to more diverse literature. Finally, teachers should be very cautious when it comes to underestimating students' ability to connect to intercultural literature despite having a cultural background that is not remotely similar to the characters of the literary work. As we saw with Participant Three, though they struggled with comprehending the concept of dual ethnic backgrounds, they could still connect with the literary work.

Despite how vital literature can be in affirming a marginalized student's identity, it is equally essential for most of the class who does not have a marginalized background to be exposed to these stories and perspectives. As mentioned multiple times through this thesis, literature is a mind opener to the majority of the students in the classroom. This process ultimately relies on the literary work showing different cultural perspectives. This concept is also reflected in the English subject curriculum in the relevance and central values section, which states, "The subject shall develop the pupils' understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice." (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020f). In other words, exposure to different cultures through literature is crucial for the student's personal identity development. With this process, the ICC acquisition can truly begin. Therefore, it could be argued that literature that touches on these same issues is relevant for students regardless of their cultural background and should thus be implemented more into Norwegian classrooms. In an increasingly multicultural classroom, the utilization of intercultural literature could prove

extremely valuable. This concept is also something Participant One reflected on when asked about whether or not they would implement intercultural literature in their own classroom. This form of literature could be a lifeline for a student's literary interest who feels that there is no literature for or by them.

Another potential limitation for the use of intercultural literature is that struggling readers or emergent readers would have significant difficulties with reading and comprehending these texts (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 316-317). Expecting the development of intercultural competence when the person is struggling with making sense of the text is unrealistic. That said, there are multiple methods that teachers could utilize to help with the student's comprehension of a text. For instance, the teacher could utilize a multitude of reading strategies before, during, and after reading a text. Strategies such as summarizing, using past knowledge, and text-structure awareness are all options that could ease the process of gathering an understanding of the text. These methods allow students to work methodically and purposefully with the text. The final reading strategy that this thesis will touch upon is the use of visual graphics and graphic organizers (Tishakov, 2019 p. 114-118). Graphic novels or comic books are a form of literature that utilizes visual graphics to anchor the story. This type of literature could therefore entice students who are not typically avid readers of traditional literature. The utilization of pictures can remove the word barrier that many readers have with denser texts.

Moreover, the pictures can help with the student's understanding of the text. However, the utilization of images requires visual literacy, as the study discussed by Hecke (2013) found. Without the ability to comprehend what the pictures are trying to convey, pictures will only help confuse the students. Nevertheless, the positives of using images outweigh the potential negatives. Besides, educating the students in visual literacy is much less time-consuming than educating them in verbal literacy. For example, explaining to a student that a specific comic book strip tries to communicate a handwave or running is much simpler than deconstructing a sentence trying to convey the same idea. Even learning a single word and permanently adding that to a student's vocabulary requires more effort and time than perpetually learning the visual literacy needed for obtaining the meaning of multiple comic strips.

6. Conclusion

Going back to the first research questions, we can conclude with the interview's findings that reading intercultural literature will make the reader more empathic and open-minded towards that culture and its members than what the students were before reading the literature due to their pre-conceived notions of 'otherness.' In short, the reader will be more understanding and positive towards said culture and less likely to exhibit ethnocentric and racist behavior towards the culture due to empathic connection. Cultural traits or habits that the readers once did not understand have become contextualized and accepted as a different but equally valid set of cultural activities such as knowledge, values, norms, and sanctions. Racial and cultural stereotypes are reinforced through mass media, resulting in a single narrative of cultures and ethnicities. Factual texts and their limitation in presenting a cohesive and engaging narrative is also a factor overall in our perception of marginalized people. Furthermore, factual texts have historically been written from a Western perspective which has distorted the 'other' culture. Literature helped the students with deconstructing these distorted and superficial ideas of 'otherness' like stereotypes. A more nuanced perspective than the single narrative of these cultures developed because literature showed aspects of these cultures that had never been shown to them in prior media. As was one of the significant findings of the interview analysis, literature can serve as an eyeopener to many new sociopolitical issues and put us in the shoes of someone who has to deal with these problems. The students became aware of issues such as epistemological violence and racial discrimination and how these issues impact marginalized people. Therefore, the need for this type of literature is even more pressing in a world where nationalism and the violence against minorities as a whole have increased in the last decade (The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2020, p. 7-13). As was one of the central findings of the interviews, literature can help with changing people's perceptions and attitudes towards different marginalized groups throughout the narrative. Therefore, we can conclude that the utilization of this type of literature in the classroom would be even more important than ten to twenty years ago.

In relation to the second research question, we can conclude that reading literature contributes to the development of better intercultural competence by first showing the reader new cultural knowledge which they observe and learn, challenging and developing the reader's attitude, and developing the reader's skill in interaction and repeated work with the literature. The knowledge that the reader is exposed to through the literary work is much more expansive and

contextualized than what a teacher could present through a classroom presentation. Furthermore, the literary work is better at explaining cultural variation and cultural differences within a specific culture than what the teacher could showcase through statistics and their own descriptions. Finally, intercultural literature focuses on the individuals and their participation instead of the conceptual idea of unified cultural masses. Our attitudes, on the other hand, are challenged through the literary work. The literary work can confront the readers with how past events shaped the world and their worldview and how specific harmful ideas have been carried on through the centuries, resulting in many of the issues facing marginalized people today. Literature can help us ask questions about how people are represented in the media and how that affects our view of them. All of these different aspects result in a positive attitude, as described by Byram (1997). These experiences culminate in a change of attitudes where the readers are more culturally relativistic and tolerant after reading the literary work. The shift in attitudes can also relate to an empathic shift in the reader, making them more passionate about issues concerning that specific culture and its members. The skill section of ICC is developed by reading and connecting the literary work with the broader cultural, social, and historical context of the piece by researching it either before, during, or after the reading session. The skill of interaction is developed when the students try to comprehend the literary work out of cobbling together their past knowledge of the culture or topic of the text.

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Appendix: Narrative interview guide

Interview guidelines:

1. The purpose of this interview is for me to ask questions and guide the discussion. That means that you, as an interviewee, will do most of the talking. I will, of course, ask you additional questions or clarify certain questions if they appear challenging or unclear.
2. The interview will be recorded, so just talk freely without concern of whether or not I am able to keep up with writing notes. After the interview is recorded and transcribed, it will be deleted. The interview is also anonymous, which means your name will not be included in the thesis.
3. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of me asking you these questions is for you to tell me about your experiences and opinions.
4. Additionally, it would be best if you refrain from naming other third-party people by name.

Interview introduction:

1. The topic for this interview is literature and culture, or more specifically, literature and its relationship to intercultural competence. Do you know what intercultural competence is?
 - a. Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate appropriately with people who have a different mindset/communication style than oneself.
2. This interview seeks your story about how you have developed or influenced by reading intercultural literature.
3. Furthermore, the interview seeks your opinion on what you have gained from reading intercultural literature.
4. As a frame of reference, I know that you, as students, have had the course Literature and Culture 2, which centered around intercultural literature. This does not mean that questions regarding intercultural literature and intercultural competence

A modified version of McAdams's semi-structured narrative interview protocol. Episodical and topical narrative interview:

1. Cultural and literary journey – Think of your journey of reading intercultural literature as a book; what are the two or three main chapters?
 - a. Name the chapters
 - b. Describe the broad contents of the chapters
 - c. Explain how one chapter is followed by the next
2. Key events – In hindsight, what are the two key events in your literary and cultural journey from best to worst?
 - a. Peak experience/highspot in your journey of reading intercultural literature
 - i. (Mindset) – Understanding different ways of thinking
 - ii. Change in attitude or perspective
 - iii. Intercultural knowledge
 - iv. Empathic gain
 - b. The worst or lowest point or experience in terms of your intercultural competence or intercultural communication
 - i. (Critical incidents) – communicative misunderstandings based on cultural differences.
 - ii. (Stereotyping) – Over-generalization of a group of people
 - iii. (Ethnocentrism) – Using own culture as reference
 - iv. (Language barriers)
- v. Do you think reading intercultural literature could have helped you in any way in this particular instance?

vi. What were your past experiences in terms of reading intercultural literature before studying at INN.

3. Significant literary works – Give a description of the 2-3 most significant literary works that have changed or added to your perspective or knowledge of other cultures.

a. Name the literary work

b. How did you come to read it?

c. What was the impact of reading the literary work?

4. Future scripts – What are your plans, goals, aspirations, and wishes in the future in light of the lesson you have gained from reading literature?

a. As a reader of intercultural literature and a teacher-student, would you like to implement intercultural literature in your classroom, and if so, how?

b. Are there any important lessons from intercultural literature you would like to teach to others?

5. Stresses and problems – Describe 2 or 3 aspects that reading intercultural literature has challenged you on a personal level.

a. Has intercultural reading literature confronted you or shaken your viewpoint or beliefs?

b. Has intercultural reading literature challenged your own stereotypes in any way?

c. Have you found the act of reading the text difficult due to language or lack of context?

6. Personal ideology – Personal belief or view on literature

a. Do you see literature as an educational tool or entertainment?

b. Do you believe literature can be used as a tool to deconstruct or dismantle stereotypes or racist beliefs in students?

i. Can it help everyone?

ii. What about teachers?

- iii. Why not?
- iv. How so?
- c. What do you think is the teachers' role in teaching intercultural literature?
 - i. Do you think there is a major difference in reading intercultural literature on your own as opposed to guided reading by the teacher?
- 7. Core theme in your cultural and literary journey – Looking back on your literary and cultural journey, what is the central message or theme that runs through it?
 - a. Reflect back on your literary and cultural journey and identify the core theme