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Master's thesis

Doing Identity: Examining the Potential of the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* to foster identity development and Intercultural Competence in the EFL Classroom

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Contents

Figure table of contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the potential of using the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to foster the development of identity and intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Identity is shown to be an important aspect of the all-round development of the pupil, and in creating the necessary foundation for future interactions. Throughout their entire lives, the pupils will encounter new identities both locally and internationally that will challenge their opinions, attitudes and understanding of themselves. This shows the need for abilities, skills and a mindset that can prepare the pupils for these encounters. The analysis and discussion show how identity is linked with intercultural competence and awareness, which creates the foundation for all future interactions.

The school has a mandate to ensure that there is room for reflection and development of identity, to prepare the pupils for these encounters. *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool can help fulfil this mandate, as it holds great potential in developing and fostering identity through its intertextuality, graphic narrative, and characters as presented in the discussion. Its multimodal form and characters convey new perspectives, which enables the novel to challenge the pupils attitudes, opinions and understanding of themselves in relation to other identities.

Sammendrag

Norsk tittel: En undersøkelse av potensiale til den grafiske novellen *American Born Chinese* for å utvikle identitet og interkulturell kompetanse i engelsk klasserommet

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker potensialet i å bruke den grafiske novellen *American Born Chinese* som et didaktisk verktøy for å utvikle identitet og interkulturell kompetanse i engelsk klasserommet. Oppgaven viser hvor viktig identitet er for den overordnede utviklingen til elevene, og i å skape det nødvendige grunnlaget for samspill med andre mennesker. Elevene vil igjennom sine liv møte på nye identiteter som vil utfordre deres holdninger, meninger og selvforståelse. Dette viser hvor nødvendig det er med ferdigheter, forståelse og tankemåte som kan forberede elevene på disse interaksjonene. Analysen og drøftingen viser sammenkoblingen mellom identitet, interkulturell kompetanse og interkulturell bevissthet som grunnlaget for alle fremtidige interaksjoner.

Skolen har et mandat i å sørge for mulighet til refleksjon og utvikling av identitet, for å forberede elevene på fremtidige møter. *American Born Chinese* som et didaktisk verktøy kan bidra i dette mandatet. Drøftingen og analysen i oppgaven viser at den har et sterkt potensial i å utvikle identitet og den nødvendige interkulturelle kompetansen gjennom sin intertekstualitet, grafiske form og karakterer. Den grafiske formen og karakterer videreformidler nye perspektiver som utfordrer elevenes holdninger, meninger og selvforståelse i forhold til andre identiteter.

1.   Introduction

"You know Jin, I would have saved myself from five hundred years' imprisonment beneath a mountain of rock had I only realized how good it is to be a monkey"

The Monkey King to Jin (Yang, 2009, p. 223).

In the final moments of *American Born Chinese*, The Monkey King reveals his backstory and purpose to Jin. Like Jin, The Monkey King also experienced a crisis of identity. He was mocked for his identity as a monkey and estranged from the other gods and deities, not too unlike Jin who is constantly faced with racism and prejudice because of his Chinese background. However, the Monkey King's anger and arrogance of his monkey identity eventually catches up with him, and he is caught under a mountain of rock for five hundred years. After a long and perilous journey with some help from the monk Wong Lai-Tsao, he eventually comes to realize that being a monkey is in fact not as bad as it would seem. He then comes down to earth and helps Jin accept himself and his Chinese identity by serving as his conscience and guiding him.

The stories presented in *American Born Chinese* contain several well-suited moments to explore identity and intercultural issues through its parallel stories, lighthearted comedy and graphic form. The graphic novel portrays some of the possible issues faced by those with a mixed cultural heritage in contemporary western society. More specifically, the novel uses humor, comedy and images to tell the story of Jin and his encounters with prejudice, racism and difficulties fitting in with a predominantly Anglo-American society. Seeing how fictional characters can support the exploration of identity (Appleyard, 1990) and challenge the reader to explore other unique and relatable identities (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90), Jin's story alongside that of The Monkey King, Danny and Chin-Kee provides possibilities of exploring themes of identity in the English foreign language classroom, in order to foster knowledge of identity and the skills, abilities and mindset requires in meeting new ones. Similarly to Jin and the Monkey King, teenagers and young adults may find themselves in a difficult period of their lives, at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood.

A quick search on UDIRs (Norwegian Educational Department) website shows over a hundred hits on the word "identity" alone, within various curricular goals and documents. The current educational curriculum (LK20) states in its core description that "The school shall support the development of each persons' identity, make the pupils confident in who they are, and also present common values that are needed to participate in this diverse society and to open doors to the world and the future" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019c). Developing identity has become an essential goal of Norwegian core education. The school has a mandate to provide opportunities for the development of identity to create pupils who are confident in themselves. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes the diversity of Norwegian society and notes the need to introduce the necessary skills and abilities required to participate in one and in meeting people from around the world in a more globalised and international context. A sense of identity and understanding of other identities in relation to the self will assist emerging adults in navigating an increasingly complex and sometimes challenging adult life, where they will inevitably interact with people from all around the world and function as global citizens in an increasingly diverse society.

Several authors note that our perception of identity and culture has evolved over the last decades. Education worldwide has become increasingly multilingual following globalization, with a subsequently increased interest in identity and language (Miller, 2004, p. 290). Moreover, Giampara (2004) and Reichl (2013) argue that the notion of identity has moved from being understood as mostly related to ethnicity and geographical borders to include more complex factors such as relations, sexuality, gender and personal experiences. As our understanding of identity and culture is becoming increasingly complex, more attention toward understanding the interplay between these factors within identity and in the classroom is necessary for a person to develop into a functioning member of society. Identity and the ability to understand the self are becoming increasingly important in a world more diverse than ever. As the pupils turn into adults, contact and cultural exchanges are inevitable and a fact. Teenagers and young adults often need to define and redefine themselves within their emerging identities, which are constantly shifting and increasingly diversified in our increasingly globalised societies (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, pp. 386 – 387). As a teacher, it is my responsibility to introduce and ensure that pupils have room to explore identity to prepare them for inevitable future interactions.

1.1 Thesis aim

The aim of this thesis is to examine how a teacher can foster the development of identity among pupils in the EFL classroom, specifically by using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to challenge the pupils' understanding of identity. Succesful interactions across different backgrounds and identities are shown to be a key factor in developing identity. Furthermore, the educational curriculum (LK20) also emphasizes identity development through interactions with new identities, as these meetings challenge our point of view and prepare us for future encounters with people from across the world (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019g). Interaction can happen through the use of literature and fiction, which is broadly discussed to include YA (young adult) fiction and graphic novels. With topics strongly connected to intercultural competence and personal struggles, *American Born Chinese* makes for a possibly good didactic tool in exploring and fostering knowledge of identity in the EFL classroom. Moreover, the form of *American Born Chinese* as a graphic novel, in addition to its stories, enables a possible fun and lighthearted multimodal approach to topics such as identity and diversity, which are often described as complex topics to approach in the classroom (Byram, 1997, p. 3). Additionally, there is a great and manifold potential in using multimodal texts, with connections both to extensive reading and intercultural learning (Lütge, 2013, p. 220). The graphic form and intertextuality of *American Born Chinese* enable the emotions, feelings and thoughts of characters such as Jin, Chin-Kee, or The Monkey King to be portrayed in a way that conventional literature is not able to.

In order to explore *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool in fostering knowledge of identity, the book will be analysed in light of the curriculum and theory in order to understand its use in fostering and developing identity in the EFL classroom. The analysis and discussion of the theory and curriculum show that interactions are essential in developing identity, as they help us expand our perspectives and understanding of self in relation to others, including opinions and attitudes toward other people. Through the exploration of Jin, Danny, The Monkey King and Wei-Chen, the pupils will be exposed to new ways of thinking, motives and modes of communication. This will assist in developing

the necessary intercultural competence and awareness necessary for successful interactions, from which identity is developed. Additionally, the multimodal form of the book is shown to assist in a closer and more critical reading of themes in the book related to identity through its intertextuality and as an alternative to conventional literature. The discussion also suggests the importance of the teacher in facilitating interactions and the context in which the book is taught.

1.2 Structure

This thesis is made up of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the context and background for using *American Born Chinese* to develop identity and intercultural competence. The second chapter presents the relevant theoretical framework, which focuses on identity, intercultural competence, multimodality and multiliteracy theory. Additionally, this chapter also presents the analysis of the curriculum in light of the theory presented. The third chapter examines the previous research and some earlier practical uses of *American Born Chinese* in the classroom. The fourth chapter presents the literary analysis of the book, which examines the potential of the book in a didactic classroom context to develop identity and intercultural competence. The fifth chapter extends the analysis, and discusses the didactic implications and possibilities in using the novel to develop identity and intercultural competence. Chapter six is the final chapter of the thesis and concludes the thesis aim, and shows the potential future research and application of the findings.

2.   Theory and method

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that will be used in the didactic analysis of *American Born Chinese* and the analysis of the curriculum. As this thesis aims to explore how a teacher can develop identity in the EFL classroom, the concept of identity will first be discussed to give a brief overview of the term and its historic connotations. Afterwards, a discussion specifying identity in an educational context and its connection with intercultural competence will take place to create a framework for the analysis of the curriculum and the final discussion of *American Born Chinese*. Theory related to the graphic form of *American Born Chinese* will also be presented in this section, which will be used to discuss the various cultural connections and multimodality of the book in relation to fostering identity and intercultural competence among pupils in the EFL classroom.

2.1 What is identity?

This section briefly describes the historical use of identity as a term to better understand its application in the educational context when fostering knowledge of identity among pupils in the EFL classroom using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool.

Scholars have for a long time noted the difficulty of defining identity, as it is a multifaceted construct and thus difficult to define conclusively, mainly because of its variation as a term in various academic and scholarly fields (Schachter & Rich, 2011, p. 223) and its constant evolution within sciences (Côté, 2006, p. 3). In an attempt to answer the question "what is identity?", Coulmas (2019) argues that the term has historically functioned as a catchphrase used in everyday speech while remaining a highly technical term (Coulmas, 2019, p. 4). Côté (2006) points out that the term has served as a "rubber sheet", often being synonymous with the culture surrounding personal and social identity and, by extension, issues related to culture. Building on this, Côté (2006) then argues that the term is not necessarily used in a "wrong way" but rather overextended in everyday use and limited to easily identifiable and often considered stable properties of an individual. Historically speaking, identity has referred to the properties that separate a person from others on both a social and an individual level. As further

noted by Schachter & Rich (2011), the term has primarily been used to identify people based on properties such as their ethnic, religious, social, and personal traits as well as achievements, social position or roles performed within a specific social interaction (p. 223-224). Schachter & Rich (2011) and Côté (2006) both points out that the term has historically represented properties of an individual or social group and seen extensive use to either group or separate peoples based on such properties, which has subsequently resulted in identity as a term including all levels and manifestations of an individual or group in daily speech.

The discussion of identity in a historical context shows the overextension of its use as a term, which has led to a somewhat simple approach and understanding of identity and an overextension of its use, by including all manifestations and levels of identity (Côté, 2006, pp. 5–7). As such, most people might associate identity with properties that are relatively easy to identify, such as gender, cultural background, and ethnicity. Côté (2006) then argues that the term is quite acceptable in casual conversation but should be specified in academic contexts to create a more precise and consistent term for the different fields that, for example, rely on the term in scientific research or in an educational context. Consequently, Côté (2006) argues that the debate surrounding the term has come to emphasise the characteristics in face of differences, and thus what we "are" against "what we are not". As such, this representation does not properly separate between social and personal identity and creates a superficial understanding of its components. In order to combat the "rubber sheet", "catchphrase", and the overly extensive use of identity as a term, Côté (2006) thus propose that identity as a term should be split into different levels of personal and social identity to describe the function of identity more accurately within its required context.

Schachter & Rich (2011) further builds on the same argument and proposes the term «IdEd» as a part of their educational framework towards understanding identity in education. The framework itself is too extensive for this thesis to cover in its entirety but argues partly that a teacher should keep in mind the different sub-levels of identity that a teacher can use when approaching a complex topic, such as identity within the four walls of the classroom. In short, they split identity between the social and personal level, similarly to Côté (2006), but further add what they refer to as "ego identity". The social level concerns itself with the individual and their identity within a larger or meaningful group, which is argued by

Schachter & Rich (2011) to be related to both their objective and subjective belonging. The objective can be understood as the social group the pupil "automatically" belongs to. This could for example be the labeled community or culture a pupil is born into, for example "Norwegian", "Middle class", or "Asian", or tied to an otherwise specific community. The subjective is the pupils understanding of the self and by extension, the solidarity with a persons' social position and the degree to which the pupil adopts traits or properties they agree with. Over time, they will negotiate themselves to understand their position in the world, from which they might find belonging or break away or change their objective or subjective belonging. In contrast with social identity, personal identity bases itself on the individual goals, values, sentiments and preferences within everyday social interactions, primarily concerning the distinctive aspects or properties which distinguish people from each other (Schachter & Rich, 2011, pp. 229–230). For example, this could be a pupil born and raised in a Chinese middle-class community in Norway. As for the social identity, the pupil might both "automatically" feel or belong to a "Chinese-Norwegian and middle class while also identifying as "punk", "gamer", or even personality traits such as "kind". The ego level of identity is arguably somewhere between personal and social identity, and concerns what the authors describe as "sameness" over time, and is further noted to be the underlying basis for the ability to positively adapt themselves and manage their commitment to personal and social identities. The ability of an individual to change over time while keeping remnants of their old identity seems to be the central aspect of the ego identity and thus ties both the social and individual identities together.

As shown, the levels now presented are arguably useful when creating a lesson plan that focuses on fostering knowledge of one aspect of identity. For example, a teacher can have the pupil first reflect on their identities on a personal level and then onwards on a social level to create a bridge between their social surroundings and individual properties of identity. By exploring the development of these over time from childhood until the early stages of adulthood, reflection will take place, which can potentially foster knowledge of how their identities exist within society around them and enable reflection of their identities. Arguably, there is great potential in exploring these levels of identity in fictional characters as well, as the exploration of new identities, their cultural expressions, feelings and ways of communication can challenge the reader into acknowledging and understanding other unique identities (Appleyard, 1990; Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90). Fictional characters that for example

experience issues related to discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes can be relatable through shared common experiences, and thus give grounds for reflection of the significance of for example racism in an individual identity. The ego level, and thus the sameness over time arguably reflects the development of personal and social identities over time and can be supported by the fact that teenagers and young adults often need to both define and redefine their emerging identities (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, pp. 386–387). As their personal identities develop, so does their understanding within the social level, which may cause a shift in how they understand and perceive themselves and others on both levels. Additionally, through exploration of the third ego level, a teacher can utilize the pupils' development to create room for reflection of who they are and their relation to other identities over time.

In fostering identity, Schachter & Rich (2011) note potential pitfalls regarding the personal beliefs of the teacher. As they write, "two educators might think that identity is a worthy target of intervention yet have quite different views of what it is about identity that makes it so. True to their views, they may implement classroom practices that are antithetical to one another" (Schachter & Rich, 2011, p. 226). These "personal values" can potentially be a key issue in teaching and fostering knowledge of identity, as teachers can have vastly different interpretations of what is important in fostering knowledge of identity. In a theoretical scenario, two teachers might find themselves having vastly different understandings of the central or important components when developing identity in the classroom. This could be due to their views or beliefs about the importance of the levels differ, or components related to identity as mentioned in the educational curriculum. In addition, curricular and educational goals will vary between for example countries, as can interpretations of identity and beliefs between communities and nations or even school politics, which is easily formed by the wider economic and social context they exist in (Youdell, 2011, p. 7). Consequently, "the pitfall of personal belief" is centered around the teachers or personal opinions and structures which surround them daily and affect their perspective. This will also arguably extend to school politics as well, which can have different values based on the organization, and religion of that specific context. Schachter & Rich (2011) do not provide an immediate solution except for reflection regarding the goal of what they are trying to accomplish by fostering knowledge of identity (p. 226). As they argue, specific focus points and reflection of what the lesson goal is in terms of fostering identity will assist in combating the pitfall of "personal beliefs". Furthermore, Reichl (2013) suggests that learning is a gradual process with no finalized

product and that "understanding is to be conceived of as anything but complete if we want to learn" (p. 109). A teacher who wishes to foster knowledge of culture, identity and the properties that are connected to these terms should then understand that fostering of identity as a lifelong process in which issues related to personal beliefs, structures and politics can potentially affect their lesson planning or approaches.

Moreover, teachers and educators should stay updated on recent developments in cultural learning an identity as shown in the LK20 and by authors such as Reichl (2013), Giampara (2004) and Schachter & Rich (2011. The theoretical framework and LK20 curriculum emphasize that knowledge related to intercultural competence and identity is built through interaction with others, which requires preparation and facilitation from the teacher in the classroom. Arguably, this facilitation is then dependent on the focus and knowledge of the teacher, which means that the teacher should follow the recent developments of cultural learning and identity theory for the best possibilities of fostering knowledge related to identity.

Giampara (2004) and Reichl (2013) note similarly to that of Coulmas (2019), Côté (2006) and Schachter & Rich (2013) that identity has often been associated with one specific aspect or part of identity such as gender or ethnicity at the expense of other equally important factors (Reichl, 2013, p. 107; Giampara, 2004, p. 16). In order to combat this historical limitation and stay relevant with recent developments within cultural learning, Reichl (2013) proposes the term *transcultural learning* which "conceive that of cultures not as stable categories but as a network of relations and seek to transcend the essentializing binarism and territorial connotations that are sometimes inherent in investigations of intercultural learning (Reichl, 2013, p. 107). For a long time, cultural learning has been limited by an individual's territorial connotations and properties in which identity or culture has been reduced to very visible and specific properties such as ethnicity. *Transcultural learning* however, builds on the idea that the properties that make up identity are "in motion" and thus affect each other. This is supported by Giampara (2004), who argues that identity is constructed from multiple interconnected or interstices such as age, generation, sexual orientation, geopolitical location, social status and even the personal understanding of self. Each of these attributes contributes to the constant redefinition and shifting of how an individual positions and understands themselves within their context. Giamparas argument thus establishes that the

categories that make up identity are many, and always "in motion", constantly affecting each other, in a similar fashion to transcultural learning.

The term transcultural learning then builds on the idea of the properties mentioned by Giampara (2004) that exist in constant flux and transition, from which they subsequently affect each other, the position of the individual identity and function across national borders. It is then arguable that the main goal of this term is to move away from the notion of identity and culture as something stable. Instead, it focuses on the factors that are constantly evolving and thus affecting each other. For example, an individual will carry a specific ethnicity for their entire life. However, properties such as sexual orientation, social class and even hobbies can easily change throughout a lifetime. As young people have a constant need to define and redefine themselves within their surroundings (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, pp. 386–387), it falls to the teachers, educators or other central people in the lives of young adults to create room for exploration of their own identities, and the subsequent properties in motion. Through understanding identity and culture as transcultural, educators or teachers who work with young adults might be able to give sufficient room to work with, understand and explore these properties as a part of the never-ending process of identity development.

The discussion of Giampara (2004) and Reichl (2013) shows an interconnectedness between identity and cultural learning. While Giampara (2004) notes the interplay of the properties that make up identity in flux, Reichl (2013) connects these to transcultural learning, and the subsequent knowledge necessary in interaction with other identities. Specifically, Reichl (2013) argues for the most central ability of this never-ending process, which is noted as the ability to "self-distancing from one's position, a respectful confrontation with other viewpoints, and a positive appraisal of contradiction and irritation as opportunities for learning" (Delanoy, 2008 in Reichl, 2013, p. 109). This ability can be connected to the properties mentioned by Giampara (2004), as the ability is arguably centred around interaction with other people. Inevitably, other identities and peoples will have differentiating viewpoints that must be met in a respectful and understandable manner for successful interactions and learning of these to take place. As such, knowledge of the properties argued by that of Giampara (2004) and an understanding of these in flux will assist in such interactions. A pupil with the ability and desire to meet, reflect and understand

new cultural expressions, systems of communication and properties of identity will arguably be more successful in an increasingly globalised and internationally connected world.

2.2 Identity in Relation with intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence appears as a central and important component of identity, and as an integral process in developing identity over time. Moreover, intercultural competence is also emphasized as an essential component of identity in the educational curriculum, both in the core values (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019g) and in the English subject curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019e). This paragraph describes intercultural competence generally, before moving on to the connection between the concept of identity and the field of intercultural competence, which will be used in the analysis of the curriculum and the following didactic analysis of *American Born Chinese*.

Several frameworks and models of intercultural competence exist for teachers to use in the classroom. In their description of "culture", The Council of Europe (2016) describes three main aspects of intercultural competence: 1. the material resources used by members (tools, foods, clothing), 2. the socially shared resources of the group (language, religion, rules of social conduct) and 3. the subjective resources that are used by individual group members (values, attitudes, beliefs) (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19). As they describe, the culture of a specific group is formed from these aspects through a network. This network is then relayed or distributed across the entire group, in which each individual member appropriates and uses a subset of the total cultural resources potentially available to them. This implies an active process in which the individual member uses the available aspects in their choice of self-definition. Moreover, seeing as their definition of "social groups" can include nations, ethnic groups, religious groups, neighborhoods, work organizations, sexual orientation groups, disability groups, generational groups, and families" (p. 19) and countless more, further implies that an individual can be a member of several groups at once, and draw on the available aspects from these simultaneously. Additionally, each of these groups will naturally have their own culture from which an individual draws on aspects from. By extension, this means that the possibility of membership across several groups at once implies that each identity differs

from one another. This further implies that every meeting with new identities has the potential to be "intercultural", as each identity is unique and built differently throughout the various levels and aspects of identity. Dypedahl & Lund (2020) discusses the perspective of intercultural competence as presented by The Council of Europe (2016) and describes the unique sets of resources from each network within an individual identity as "lenses". Tension may occur from the various lenses of the individuals (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 19), from which Reichl (2013) notes the opportunity to learn from such encounters. However, this requires some degree of the ability of self-distancing as well as being able to see other viewpoints with a positive appraisal of contradiction (Reichl, 2013, p. 109)

Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) defines intercultural competence as "the ability to relate to people who have mindsets or communication styles that are different from one's own" (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 81). As they explain, they use the word "relate" because it is relevant when interacting with people in person, and when interpreting actions and words through text. Moreover, they also write that "intercultural competence is relevant both when we interact with people in person and when we interpret people's actions and words through text" (p. 81). In their words, text refers to any situation or cultural encounter through media, the internet or by reading literature (p. 81-82). The development and fostering of intercultural competence then happen when a pupil is exposed to "texts" in its broad definition, and meets new cultural expressions, ways of thinking and communicative methods that the pupil is not familiar with. As such, their definition of IC includes both personal and non-personal modes of communication, for example by using literature to communicate and develop intercultural communication. Through the engagement of various texts in English, pupils are given the opportunity to develop an understanding of other mindsets, ways of living and communicative styles (p. 82) which will improve their ability for successful interactions, improve their level of intercultural competence Seeing how fictional characters can challenge the reader into exploring other unique identities (Appleyard, 1990; Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90), it is then further arguable that the development of intercultural competence can happen through interaction with texts in English that contain unique identities which might give the pupils a glimpse into new cultural expressions, modes of communication and ways of living. As such, the development and fostering of knowledge related to identity shows a strong connection with the development of intercultural competence through the emphasis on interaction with texts, both in-person or through that of literature or other forms of media.

Adding to this, Schachter & Galliher (2018) argue for scholars of identity to consider the additional aspects of identity, namely the impact of relationships, the advent of the internet and acknowledgement of the structures in society that cause racism or otherwise oppression of identity. Specifically, they write that scholars of identity should

> […] engage more fully with the relational, contextual, interactional, and cultural components […] including analysis of identity development within the context of important relationships; the advent of the Internet as a context for identity development and greater acknowledgement of the impact of forces of marginalization and oppression on identity development (Schachter & Galliher, 2018, p. 247)

The aspects provided by Schachter & Galliher (2018) also imply a connection with intercultural competence, seeing how they are similar in the emphasis on development within and through relationships with other identities. This notion can be seen in the definition of intercultural competence by The Council of Europe (2016), which notes the networks of relationships and the resources from these as an integral aspect of culture and by extension – identity. Moreover, the definition by Schachter & Galliher (2018) also explicitly mentions the internet, the development of identity through communication across the internet, and the acknowledgement of what "forces of marginalization" such as racism, prejudice and stereotypes. Arguably, a teacher who wishes to create reflection of identity and develop/foster knowledge of identity should have a solid foundational knowledge of intercultural competence, and by extension the internet, its relation to identity development and the effects of such "forces of marginalization".

Furthermore, a common denominator of the theory presented is how the development of intercultural competence and knowledge related to identity functions as a never-ending process. Byram et al. (2002) write that "the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, but to be a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11). Similarly, Reichl (2013) suggests that learning is "a gradual process of understanding rather than a product at the end of a straightforward process" (Reichl, 2013, p. 109). The definition provided by Reichl (2013) of transcultural learning emphasizes that it is through interaction with others that we learn to be respectful, and tolerant and use moments of contradiction and "irritation" as opportunities

for learning of other identities. The acquisition and development of intercultural competence can never be finalized as a product, as it is a process of evolution. In their definition of identity, Schachter & Rich (2011) writes that "The individual's dynamic self-understandings and self-definitions used to structure, direct, give meaning to and present the self, that are negotiated intra-and interpersonally across the lifespan within sociocultural contexts, along with the psychosocial processes, meaning-systems, practices and structures that regulate their continued development" (p. 223-224). Their definition also implies that the construction of identity is an ongoing process that never officially ends, as it specifically mentions the negotiation of identity across an individual's lifespan. Furthermore, The Council of Europe (2016) defines intercultural competence as "the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations" (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 23). Their definition also implies an active process in which the individual mobilizes resources and aspects from a vast network of social groups to respond to intercultural encounters, which will naturally change over time. The definitions presented arguably show that the process of fostering knowledge related to identity and culture is everlasting, with an emphasis on the abilities and resources available of an individual in meeting new identities.

Building on the same notion of IC as a gradual learning process, Tomlinson (2019) suggests the term "intercultural awareness" to describe what he believes is a more realistic approach toward cultural learning. Tomlinson (2019 defines intercultural awareness as

> […] accepting that cultures differ in their beliefs and behavioural norms. It also means not being judgemental about the perceived differences between your own and other cultures. It results eventually from considered and open-minded reflection on actual and/or vicarious experiences of cultures in action and requires an initial tolerance of ambiguity when you do not understand why people from the other culture seems to be behaving in different ways from yourself (Tomlinson, 2019, p. 19-20).

The definition of intercultural awareness suggests that the ability to not be judgemental about perceived differences, an open mind reflection of experiences from interaction with cultural encounters, and a willingness to learn from these through a tolerance of uncertainty when such interactions fail, are key abilities. Tomlinson (2019) argues that intercultural competence

alone cannot be developed from standard language teaching because of its limitation of time in the classroom. As he shows, the goal of IC is the ability to interact successfully with identities of other cultures which takes both time and real-life cultural encounters to develop. Language classes alone are then argued to not be sufficient for developing intercultural competence, unless given the right materials and enough time, which is unusual (p. 19-20).

Several authors write about teaching intercultural competence and the skillset required by the teacher to foster such knowledge among pupils in the classroom. In his description of intercultural competence, Michael Byram argues for its many dimensions in both textual understanding toward cultural and linguistic, and further emphasises the need to see and meet other perspectives as key in developing intercultural competence (p. 3-4). Irimia (2012) builds directly on Byram (1997) and notes how learning IC focuses less on the transmission of culture and rather "on raising awareness of culture in the lived experience of the learners and people from the target language culture as well as other cultures present in a classroom or community" (Irimia, 2012, p. 331). As such, Irimia (2012) argues that a teacher must possess intercultural knowledge to some degree, and allow it to develop alongside that of his/her students. In terms of teaching intercultural competence, Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) argues that the development and fostering of IC should not come as what they describe as "an additional element on top of all the other aspects of the curriculum that should be worked with in the English classroom. Rather, the goal should be to integrate intercultural issues into other learning aims" (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 84; Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 19). In order for a teacher or educator to do so successfully, they propose that a teacher should have the knowledge and understanding of IC as a concept, skills in giving language learning activities an IC dimension and the ability to assess learning of IC, both formatively and summatively. As they describe, any teacher who wishes to add an element of IC require competence and knowledge of the social group, target "culture" and knowledge of how to relay this information to the pupils.

2.3 Analysis of Identity and Intercultural Competence in the curriculum

The aim of this section is to pick apart and analyse relevant instances of identity in the educational curriculum (LK20). A central issue with the curriculum is that identity is never defined as a term. Despite being mentioned repeatedly, neither the core curriculum nor the competence aims of the English subject provide any description or explanation of the factors contributing to shaping and developing identity in any educational context. There are some mentions of identity in specific curricular reports, but these are mostly limited to the interplay of identity within the diverse context of society (NOU, 2015). The lack of definition and ambiguity of the curriculum means that this thesis will have to provide some description and explanation of the characteristics and factors that contribute to shaping identity, to be able to define it as a concept for the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the analysis also builds on the strong link between intercultural competence and the fostering of knowledge related to identity. As such, this chapter will provide an analysis of identity in the curriculum (LK20) and its underlying components that are strongly related to intercultural competence, and aspects to better understand how a teacher can foster knowledge related to identity among pupils in the EFL classroom.

One of the many mentions of identity is in the core curriculum. Specifically, section 1.2, named Identity and Cultural Diversity, states that: "The school shall support the development of each persons' identity, make the pupils confident in who they are, and also present common values that are needed to participate in this diverse society and to open doors to the world and the future" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019c). This is the first mention of identity in the curriculum and provides the context necessary to understand its importance in Norwegian education. Firstly, this section directly states that the school is responsible for providing room to explore identity, to create confidence in the many identities within the classroom. Secondly, this section further suggests that identity must be understood in a diverse and multicultural setting, both locally and globally. As national borders continue to shrink, identities will become more "mixed" and less "stable". It is then up to the educational system, the teacher(s) and schools to support each pupil's identity, and provide ground for its

construction to prepare them for adult life, from where they will continue to develop their identities in meeting others.

The emphasis on actively supporting the development of identity in the curriculum appears as a central aspect in most of the theories presented in the framework. Notably, the "Identity Education" (IdEd) term as proposed by Schachter & Rich (2011) aims to give teachers a framework of identity to work with in fostering and developing knowledge surrounding identity. As they argue, developing identity implies an active involvement by the teacher in fostering knowledge of pupil identity, and ensuring that there is proper room within the classroom to explore their unique identities, networks and resources on the various levels of identity presented by Schachter & Rich (2011). Active engagement over time will contribute in developing and fostering the necessary knowledge of identity and intercultural awareness in combination with the texts that are deemed to be "sufficient" enough to construct awareness of cultural differences, expressions and ways of communication.

Building on this, section 1.2 of the core curriculum states that the "School shall support the development of each person's identity […] and also present common values that are needed to participate in this diverse society […]" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019c). The curriculum thus establishes that the Norwegian educational context and society are, by nature, diverse and multicultural. Any approach toward identity construction should be made with this in mind. By emphasising identity in a multicultural, multilingual and diverse context, the curriculum directly ties the construction and fostering of knowledge related to identity with the field of intercultural competence in its entirety. Every meeting with new identities has the potential to be "intercultural" as each identity carries with them what Dypedahl & Lund (2020) argues to be individual "lenses", or rather perspectives from which to see the world. These lenses are colored by the relations, networks and resources an individual obtains from membership within these groups (The Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19-20), which as noted could be neighbourhood communities, groups concerning sexual orientation and everything between these. The amount of social groups available for membership arguably increases with the rise of globalisation and the interconnectedness of the world. As Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) then notes, "intercultural competence is relevant both when we interact with people in person and when we interpret people's actions and words through text" (p. 81). These interactions with identities and their individual "lenses"

are not only inevitable, but also common place in the diverse context established by the curriculum. As such, this demonstrates the need for abilities, skills and mindsets that prepare the pupils for such encounters and interactions within Norwegian society and internationally.

Communicative competence is important not only for global and international communication but also for communication on a local level. Increasingly, more non-native speakers use the English language to communicate with one another. The curriculum thus shows a strong connection between identity, its construction in a diverse world and in regards to communication between peoples. It emphasises the importance of developing intercultural competence, to enable a strong foundation of understanding themselves and others' identities. The construction of identity, as presented in the curriculum, emphasises not only understanding ones' own but also in relation to those around.

Pupil identity is mentioned in section 2.1, "*Social learning and development*," which states that "A pupil's self-image, opinions and attitudes grow in interaction with others. Social learning takes place in both the teaching, training and in all the other activities at school" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019f). As shown, the curriculum specifically notes that a pupil's identity is partly formed through social interaction, which makes skills and abilities related to interaction and communication vital. This is specifically what Tomlinson (2019) discusses within his term of "intercultural awareness", from which one possible approach is to use the English classroom as "grounds" from which to prepare the pupils for possible intercultural meetings and interactions. The importance of interaction in constructing intercultural competence, and by extension identity and the understanding of self in relation with others, is further emphasized in the definition of intercultural competence provided by Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020). They explicitly state that interaction happens as a part of being able to relate with other identities (p. 81), which arguably means that intercultural awareness is an essential component in developing and fostering intercultural competence for communication and is thus relevant when interacting in person or through text. The curriculum thus emphasizes identity construction through interaction with others, which is inevitable in a diverse society.

Moreover, the fact that the curriculum writes "inside and outside of the classroom" specifically (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019f), this further implies that the

development of intercultural awareness happens both inside and outside of the classroom, and by extension the development of the ability to construct identity as well through intercultural meetings in general. Knowledge of one's identity in relation to other identities will be necessary for constructing one's identity and figuring out where one belongs in society. In Norway, a child will begin their educational journey at the age of 5 or 6, which will, in most cases, end the year they turn 19. Throughout their long educational journey, they are expected to become fully functioning members of society. In this period, their identities will form and shape inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, young people are expected to navigate an increasingly complex relationship between work, society and education (Wyn, 2013, p. 91). Figuring out one's identity within an increasingly complex and diverse society can be quite difficult. As identity is partly made through interaction, stimulating cultural meetings and new expressions will be an essential part of the pupils' toolbox. Such simulation can, as noted by Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) be done using texts with the necessary contents and resources for exploring intercultural encounters as further noted by Tomlinson (2019).

The English subject curriculum mentions the need for this communicative competence between identities and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the subject curriculum states that "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 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019h). Arguably, the development of their understanding happens by interacting with people and texts within the English subject. This can be tied back to the abilities mentioned in the central values of the subject, which are: Knowledge of and exploratory approach to language, communication patterns, lifestyles, ways of thinking and social conditions open for new perspectives on the world and ourselves (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019e). Notably, these abilities can be strengthened through the development of intercultural awareness, which promotes curiosity and engagement in intercultural interactions and encounters. Moreover, such abilities will help them learn from possible moments of irritation in interaction with new cultural expressions (Reichl, 2013, p. 109). In turn, they will have a better understanding of the world around them which will subsequently aid them in interactions, and then by extension assist them in developing their identities. Additionally, by focusing on intercultural awareness in the classroom, they will be better prepared for the

inevitable construction outside of the classroom as well. Consequently, communicative knowledge and the ability to keep a broad perspective of others are crucial skills to have. This will be important for opening new interpretations of the world while keeping the pupils curious about other people.

Identity can also function as a common denominator between other interdisciplinary topics in the curriculum (LK20), notably Health & Life skills and Democracy & Citizenship. The description of *Health and Life skills* in the *Core Curriculum* states as following:

> The school's interdisciplinary topic health and life skills shall give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices. In the childhood and adolescent years, the development of a positive self-image and confident identity is particularly important (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019b)

The curriculum specifies that directly is a crucial part of mental and physical health. A sense of confidence and a positive self-image of their identities will be necessary for developing and becoming functioning adult members of society. Reflection surrounding identity and in relation to others will assist in developing a positive self-image, which is essential for mental health and enabling self-consciousness. These critical skills will be of great use not only while the pupils are emerging as functioning adults, but for the rest of their lives. Identity is not directly mentioned in the description of *Democracy and Citizenship*. However, minority rights and the ability to understand and respect conflicting opinions are mentioned as important values. Reflection of identity can enable and foster empathy, making it easier for the pupils to see social issues from new perspectives. This mention can be tied to the "forces of marginalization" (Schachter & Galliher, 2018, p. 247). Knowledge of how to prevent forces of marginalization through the development of knowledge related to minority rights and empathy will be crucial in the construction of individuals in relation to social identity. This can be tied to the English subject curriculum as well, which states that "The subject shall give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019h). This means that such knowledge is meant to be fostered within the English subject as well and gives a responsibility to the teacher in giving room for exploration of both intercultural competence and intercultural awareness, as well as fostering knowledge of identity from these.

These interdisciplinary topics play a significant role in the Norwegian curricular goal of Bildung, which is the school's education and all-around development mission. It states that "The teaching and training shall give the pupils a good foundation for understanding themselves, others and the world, and for making good choices in life […]" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019d). Despite being slightly vague, the presented interdisciplinary topics are important in creating a good foundation for the pupils to understand themselves. Reflection on their identities and the countless factors included will be an important part of the all-around development of the pupil, as it touches on several aspects of their lives. Having a clear understanding of one's identity and construction is essential in meeting other cultural expressions, backgrounds, and identities. A solid foundation will assist in enabling empathy and fostering intercultural competence. This foundation is necessary when meeting people from different backgrounds, which is inevitable in the diverse society specified in the curriculum.

Despite the lack of definition surrounding identity as a term, the analysis shows that the curriculum strongly emphasizes diversity and cultural expressions within the field of intercultural competence as central factors in constructing and fostering of knowledge related to identity as a concept. The school has a mandate in creating grounds for reflection of identity, and by extension how we interact with others. It is through this interaction that our identities are developed, as we pull knowledge and resources from our networks in fostering and developing knowledge of our and others' identities. The fostering of knowledge related to diversity and intercultural competence will assist in the interaction and reading of intercultural texts such as *American Born Chinese*, and the crisis of identity that is contained within. Consequently, this will assist in creating a solid foundation for exploration of identity and the subsequent development in knowledge related to the many levels of identity of the pupils.

2.4 Multiliteracy and graphic novels

American Born Chinese is a graphic novel, and functions as the didactic tool in which this thesis is based on. In order to explore the didactic possibilities of using this novel in the classroom to foster knowledge of identity, its graphic form must be accounted for as well in

a didactic sense. This section aims to showcase relevant theory connected to the use of graphic novels specifically centred around multiliteracy and multimodality. The section begins by describing the graphic novel and its short educational history some of its key features, before moving on to theories of multiliteracy and multimodality. The theory is tied to the curriculum (LK20) at the end of this section, to explain their relevance in the classroom.

Graphic novels have according to McCloud (1993) long historical roots. Early examples of sequential visual arts exist from the famous Bayeux-Tapesty from medieval England and hieroglyphs from ancient Egypt (McCloud, 1993, p. 20). Humans have historically speaking used visual pictures and various forms of graphics to convey meaning for a long time. Burwitz-Melzer (2013) notes that the art form and style of graphic novels, picturebooks and comics have been regarded as lesser satisfactory for educational purposes and often met with substantial prejudice, despite their many possibilities. Graphic novels have historically been compared with "higher" forms of literature and have even been seen as harmful to younger people. The last decades, however, have seen a gradual change and acceptance of graphic novels as a satisfactory and perfectly acceptable form of literature in the EFL classroom. As Burwitz-Melzer (2013) argues, "developing language competence and the understanding of others through authentic literary texts can be based on all kinds of genres and text forms: prose, poetry and drama, picturebooks, comics and graphic novels as well as films" (Burwitz-Melzer, 2013, p. 56). The use of graphic novels in a didactic situation hold many potential benefits, despite their history of being considered "lesser" in an academic or educational context.

In his definition of comic books and the graphic narrative within, Scott McCloud (1993) argues that they function as "Sequential art" and "Juxtaopsed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence" (McCloud, 1993, p. 9). McCloud (1993) emphasises the arrangement of pictures next to each other as the "sequential" aspect, and by extension the deliberate sequence of being placed next to each other to bring meaning. These can be "juxtaposed" as well, in which the contrasts between the panels are set up against each other for a specific purpose. Building on this, Scott McCloud (1993) defines comics as "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1993, p. 9). The term "graphic novel" and

"comic" are often used interchangeably (Rimmereide, 2021, p. 198; Rimmereide, 2020, p. 199), which can cause some confusion about the difference between the two. However, Rimmereide (2021) specifically notes that the graphic novel "captures the essence of the chosen material more clearly than comic books" (p. 198). Burwitz-Melzer (2013) cites Art Spiegelmann, who has previously stated that graphic novels are "a comic book you need a bookmark for" (Burwitz-Melzer, 2013, p. 60). The key difference between the two seems to be rooted in the length, as a graphic novel usually deals with a set of themes or topics within a book specifically, which can be from anywhere between a hundred to three hundred pages. This is in contrast with the comic, who Burwitz-Melzer (2013) notes are usually at the length of thirty two pages (p. 60).

Several authors argue for the countless benefits in using the graphical novel, comic or narrative in the classroom for motivational purposes. Carter (2008) argues that the mixing of words and images can potentially increase and foster comprehension and memory skills (Carter, 2008, p. 48). Burwitz-Melzer (2013) notes that "comics and graphic novels may have a beneficial effect on reluctant readers and also enhance the reading of good learners" (p. 57). The statement made by Burwitz-Melzer (2013) can be connected to the motivational aspects of graphic novels, which Rimmereide (2021) builds on. Rimmereide (2021) notes that "graphic novels may motivate a variety of learners and provide a wider range of literature for learners, which subsequently improves their general reading skills" (Rimmereide, 2021, pp. 198–199). Graphic novels can offer an alternative to standard literature, which might be appealing for certain pupils. Additionally, graphic novels adds an element of multimodality which might encourage their exploration as certain pupils might already be familiar with the graphic narrative genre. The motivational aspect arguably comes from the choice of using graphic novels as an alternative to conventional literature, as Rimmereide further adds that graphic novels themselves does not lead to advanced language development (p. 199). This can be further tied to Carter (2008), who notes how comics can "act as a getaway to more varied reading" (p. 48). The reading of graphic novels themselves does not lead to increased language development in itself. Rather, it is the possible variation and graphic alternative to conventional literature that creates the "getaway" function mentioned by Carter (2008). The increased reading motivation, and subsequent "reading" itself is arguably what leads to increased reading and reading development. Nevertheless, both Carter (2008) and Burwitz-Melzer (2013) note that teachers and educators worldwide

remain skeptical to the use of the graphic narrative in the class, despite the fact that comics and similar forms of art show great potential in development of visual literacy (Burwitz-Melzer, 2013, p. 56; Carter, 2008, p. 58)

Moreover, Burwitz-Melzer (2013) notes how pupils learning for example English as a foreign or second language might find the duality of text and graphic useful, as they can lead to a better understanding of other cultures, values and traditions (p. 57-58). McCloud (1993) notes that "pictures are received information. We need no formal education to "get the message". The message is instantaneous" (p. 49). In contrast, "writing is perceived information. It takes time and specialized knowledge to decode the abstract symbols of language" (p. 49). Reading pictures, emotions and the events of a story through images does not necessarily require as much training as reading a novel or short story does. Building on this, McCloud (1993) also notes that "All of us perceive the world as a whole through the experience of our senses. Yet our senses can only reveal a world that is fragmented and incomplete" (McCloud, 1993, p. 62). He further adds that "Our perception of reality is an act of faith, based on mere fragments" (p. 62). As individuals, we carry with us certain biases, and a limited understanding of the world based on what we have experienced, perceived and learned. These fragments can never be complete as "even the most widely travelled mind can only see so much of the world in the course of a life" (p. 62). McCloud thus suggests that we are dependent on our perception, and the "lenses" we use to see the world with. Arguably, there is a connection between our somewhat "fragmented" perception and the use of graphic novels. We use our lenses to read and understand texts and images. Through the use of pictures and the otherwise multimodal property of graphic novels, cultural cues and otherwise complex issues can be shown in a way that conventional literature is not able to, and thus function as a good way to activate the pupils. The use of for example pictures in addition to text allows us to read in new ways, and assist us in understanding new information.

In using graphic novels in the classroom, Rimmereide (2021) notes some of the key features that are arguably necessary for a teacher to have knowledge of, if one wishes to effectively teach a topic using the graphic narrative as a didactic tool in the classroom. Specifically, Rimmereide (2021) mentions the *panel, text* and *gutter* and describes the function of these (p. 199-200). The panel itself is what constitutes the main feature of the graphic novel, and

specifically refers to the images that exist within the individual panel in the comic/graphic novel, with further underrategories of panels such as "Character panel, Climax Panel and Foreshadowing panel" to name a few examples. The function of the panels are to develop or further detail the story and text (Rimmereide, 2021, p. 206). The text specifically refers to the primarily used speech bubbles or narrative captions, from which the characters or otherwise verbally communicate within the frame. The *gutter* refers to the gap, or space between the panels. The function of the gutter is to indicate a shift from one panel to the next (p. 199-200). As shown by McCloud (1993), the gutter in itself is empty, but functions in a sense as an extension of the action that is contained within the panel. Despite the gutter "cutting off" the picture, we still imagine what is around it (p. 60-61). The three now presented key features of the graphic novel can be traced back to the fact that "all of these features of graphic novels impact the tempo and tension in the narrative" (Rimmereide, 2021, p. 200). For example, the speech bubble or gutter can be expanded to create more space between the next panel, in order to indicate a specific and purposeful transition. The panel themselves can vary in size, in order to have the reader focus on a certain scene or character presented. Additionally, these three key features refer back to the "sequential" aspect of the graphic novel and comic, which Rimmereide (2021) notes shows how they are supposed to be read from the top left to down right, in a "sequence" (p. 200).

Several theoretical frameworks has been written and established with the increase in use of graphic novels and comics in the classroom. Notably, The New London Group (2000) notes that what we consider "literacy" has changed over the last decades. They write that literacy as a term and focus point has remained "centred on language only, and usually on a singular national form of language at that, being conceived as a stable system based on rules such as mastering sound-letter correspondence. [...] Such a view of language must characteristically translate into a more or less authoritarian kind of pedagogy" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5). In order to combat and counteract this limiting notion of literacy, they argue for two aspects in which they believe are central for understanding literacy today:

1. That the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies, and the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate

2. That literacy pedagogy must now account for the burgeoning variety of texts form associated with information and multimedia technologies

The New London Group (2000) thus argues that literacy has been limited, restricted and authoritarian. The recent developments in the world however, shows a need in new approaches of literacy and pedagogy, in understanding the new contexts, modes of communication and variety of texts that has come as a result of globalisation and technological improvements. Building on this, The New London Group (2000) further write that "meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal – in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are a part and parcel of visual, audio and spatial patterns of meaning" (p. 5). To further support this, they also note in the chapter surrounding use of multiliteracy regarding technological change that the "literacy requirements have changed and will continue to change as new technologies come on the marketplace and quickly blend into our everyday private and work lives" (Carmen, 2000, p. 71).

As such, it is clear that there is a need for new ways of approaching pedagogy. The recent, and arguably still ongoing development of technology and society means that people communicate in ways that require a new approach toward how we understand one another, and read in both work and social life. As such, for communication to happen effectively, consistent and successfully. The New London Group suggests the notion of "multiliteracy". More specifically, they write that:

> A pedagogy of multi-literacies, by contrast, focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. These differ according to culture and context, and have specific cognitive, cultural and social effects. In some cultural contexts – in an Aboriginal community or in a multimedia environment, for instance-the visual mode of representation may be much more powerful and closely related to language than "mere literacy" would be able to allow. Multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy: One which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve various cultural purposes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5)

Multiliteracies takes into account the various modes of representation to give a more accurate representation of how communication happens. The multi-faceted representation of literacy varies from context to context, but are shaped by the environment and the needs of those in it. As these "needs" and contexts differ from one another, multiliteracy as a term

arguably takes on a diverse notion as well, as it focuses on how these contexts can be represented in the classroom. By emphasising multiliteracy in the classroom, a teacher thus moves away from the notion of teaching literacy through print-based text alone for the single purpose of national language formation, and by extension acknowledge the various contexts of which "texts" can exist in, the "burgeoning" amount of forms, and actively combats the "authoritarian" approach of pedagogical practice that they describe. Multiliteracy enables the teacher or educator to consider the entirety of texts and the cultural context of which it is taught.

As an important part of multiliteracy, The New London Group identifies five semiotic systems as a part of multiliteracy. These are *visual, audio, gestural, spatial* and *linguistic*. These semiotic systems represents different parts of communication, and thus the systems of which a pupil can draw familiarity from to read and understand these. According to Rimmereide (2020), a multimodal approach recognizes and employs several of these semiotic systems at once in combination (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 194). Graphic novels are by nature, multimodal, as they contain these semiotic aspects. Moreover, comics and graphic novels offer a new way of reading beyond the traditional definition of literacy, which commonly refers to written and printed text, involving reading and writing skills. For a pupil to understand the course of events, contents, themes of a book, the ability to understand and read multimodal texts as an ability will be essential in capturing the essence of the graphic novel and its content. Multimodal texts are becoming increasingly commonplace and has now gained the "status" as an equal form of literature for use in education (Burwitz-Melzer, 2013, p. 56).

The current educational curriculum emphasizes the need for knowledge related to multimodality in several sections. In the section regarding basic skills, multimodality can be tied to the reading skill as it is mentioned explicitly. Specifically, the curriculum writes in the section of basic skills concerning reading that "reading and finding information in multimedia texts with competing messages and using reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit information" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a). The curriculum thus emphasizes the ability to read between the lines to find information that is both implicit and explicit within multimodal texts. Graphic novels as previously mentioned, often contains and portray messages and ideas that are implicit and explicit through the use

of its key features, content and ability to portray for example expressions and body language of characters.

The ability to produce multimodal texts are directly mentioned as well in the English subject curriculum, which states that the pupil is expected to be able to "write different types of formal and informal texts, including multimedia texts with structure and coherence that describe, discuss, reason and reflect adapted to the purpose, recipient and situation" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019e). Through the English subject, a pupil is expected to be able to produce a multimodal text. Arguably, this requires a certain degree of knowledge related to for example graphic novels. The pupils must to some degree be familiar with the genre of graphic novels or the graphic narrative in general, which can be explored as a part of the reading skill before moving on to the writing and production of one. The basic skill of writing also mentions the creation of different types of coherent texts that present viewpoints and knowledge (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a). The creation of a multimodal text such as a graphic novel can be one possible approach in developing writing as a skill in the EFL/ESL classroom. The use of the semiotic aspects as mentioned by Rimmereide (2021) and the teaching of these can assist in developing an understanding of how different modes of communication function together in the creation of one coherent text.

By working with graphic novels, a teacher might also able to approach the overarching goal of Norwegian eduaction: Bildung. Multimodal texts are manifold, and exist in a vast quantity and of different qualities. Specifically, multimodal comics or graphic novels present opportunities to approach curricular and competence goals which are a part of other values as well, such as intercultural competence, reading, writing and the overarching goal of all-round development of the pupil. Rimmereide (2021) mentions that the ability to read and understand messages and their implicit meaning, and the semiotic aspects of communication are crucial abilities in decoding messages in todays society (p. 200-201). In other words, multimodal texts can function as a tool that can create a "bridge" between the various curricular aims and goals, and support the approach toward these goals as an essential tool of literacy.

3. Previous Research & Use of *American Born Chinese*

This section provides an overview of some of the existing literature that discusses the use of *American Born Chinese* didactically in various lessons and pupil groups. The purpose of this section is to show how the book has been used in various lessons and didactic situations by other educators and authors.

Several authors note the particular form of *American Born Chinese* as a graphic novel in approaching complex topics such as identity and intercultural issues such as racism, prejudice and empathy. Notably, a classroom experiment conducted by Carter & Gomes (2010) found that the use of blog posts as a discussion forum together with *American Born Chinese* was quite succesful (Gomes & Carter, 2010, pp. 73–74). It should be noted that the pupils represented in this experiment were a part of a special educational class, in which several children primarily dealt with Asperger syndrome. The pupils would read parts of the graphic novel, and then use their own experiences as grounds and basis for the discussion. Most of the pupils found Jin relateable as they had themselves experienced social exclusion, prejudice and bullying not too unlike that of the experiences of Jin. Carter & Gomes (2010) further argue that the digital discussion forum created with the blog posts removes some of the limitations of the conventional classroom, and thus allows for a more safe place in which the pupils can discuss and reflect on their thoughts. They also note how there was an increase in reading comprehension and social understanding, a reflection which they argue will be extremely useful outside of the classroom as well (p. 75). The findings by Carter & Gomes (2010) thus indicate that pupils with somewhat similar experiences of being excluded or prejudiced against have sympathy and an understanding of Jin, and that in combination with the form of *American Born Chinese* as a graphic novel and a safe space to discuss enabled a beneficial reflection of the graphic novel and its stories. Despite not having a particular affiliation with that of East Asia, being an ethnic minority or the diaspora experienced by Jin, the pupils still found ways in which to connect with and reflect on character such as Jin and The Moneky King.

Somewhat similar to the study by Carter & Gomes (2010), Schieble (2011) also conducted a study in which *American Born Chinese* was used in a digital classroom setting. The study

was conducted with a small group of adolescents from a mostly Anglo-American community in the U.S. within the confines of a virtual classroom during the pandemic. In contrast with the previous study however, the findings by Schieble (2011) suggest that the pupils constructed the characters' feelings of racial and cultural inferiority as an individual matter, instead of institutional forms of exclusions. Schieble (2011) argues that this is because of the pupils background, and the discourse of which it was taught in during the pandemic. As most of the pupils had an Anglo-American generally few could emphasise with characters such as Jin or The Monkey King, thus making them believe that the exclusion they experienced were individualised. As such, Schieble (2011) argues that any critical examination of *American Born Chinese* or similar books and novels requires the teacher to be mindful of the background of the pupil, and how the system of privilege and disadvantage serve as a sociocultural base for possible responses to the book (Schieble, 2011, p. 295).

When compared, both authors note some consequences of using *American Born Chinese* in a digital context. What separates them is the background and context of which the graphic novel was taught. The blog posts and safe discussion forum mentioned in Gomes & Carter (2010) might have impacted their willingness to reflect and discuss a somewhat complex and difficult topic, and allows for the pupils to think before they publish as well. It can be argued that the safety aspect which was the case for Gomes & Carter (2010) does not exist in Schieble (2011), and as such the pupils might not be as engaged and willing to share their own experiences. Additionally, the class of Schieble (2011) lacked much needed foundation of pre-work of which to discuss the events of the book, thus making them understand Jin's feeling as individual. In contrast with the class of Gomes & Carter (2010), the class of Schieble (2011) had a certain privilege, and thus a disadvantage in their sociocultural base and understanding of *American Born Chinese*. Any attempts in using the graphic novel should be made with the context of which it is taught, and the background, privilege and experiences of the pupils in mind.

In connection with the already mentioned digital settings and system of privilege as noted by Carter & Gomes (2010) and Schieble (2011), Dunn (2018) further discusses the use of variation and discussion when approaching *American Born Chinese*. To be more specific, Dunn (2018) conducted a succesful classroom experiment based on variation of tasks and discussion, utilizing the picture form of the book to teach literacy. The class was asked to

write down conventions they thought was important when reading graphic novels generally. Afterwards, he split the class into groups with the pupils more experienced with the graphic form as "leaders", in which they taught the "newbies" and shared their knowledge. The teacher then created discussion by asking the groups new questions, using a "multiliteracies" approach. The pupils taught each other terminology related to graphic novels such as "bleeds", "Head shot" and "motion strokes" (Dunn, 2018, pp. 88–89). Dunn (2018) primarily argues that graphic novels such as *American Born Chinese* thus have the possibility of enabling a better view of literacy by breaking the typical convention that books are superior for learning. Additionally, Dunn further notes how more advanced readers who are already good at conventional reading will push themselves to teach other pupils, making such an activity suitable for classes with varying degrees of reading skill. Based on the results achieved by the class presented, it is arguable that variation and building on previous knowledge regarding the form of *American Born Chinese* are central to understanding the message and themes presented through the story and characters such as Jin, Wei-Chen and The Monkey King. Building on the pupils knowledge of comic books, and strengthening any approach with a varied set of activities and tasks seems helpful in any didactical approach for the pupils to pick up on the contents of the book.

The findings presented by Dunn (2018) can be linked to the findings of Schieble (2014), who specifically mentions the increasingly important role of the teacher in "prompting students to engage in democratic dialogue about equity in response to visual messages that circulate historic and present-day racism and other derogatory messages about class, gender, sexual orientation and ability" (Schieble, 2014, p. 52). The study explores the reading of images in *American Born Chinese* specifically and how pupils create meaning from symbols, text and images in the graphic novel. The primary argument of Schieble (2014) is that the world is becoming increasingly diverse, meaning that the teacher plays a vital role in ensuring that pupils understands the context, messages and themes of *American Born Chinese*. Both Schieble (2014) and Dunn (2018) thus argue for the vital role of the teacher in any didactical approach of *American Born Chinese*, though with a slightly different focus points. Dunn (2018) mainly focuses on variation through active participation, discussion and guidance from the teacher, as shown through his findings. As the teacher walks around and creates discussion, pupils will respond and work together in groups of varied skill levels to figure out an answer. Schieble (2014) however, argues for the important role of the teacher,

and the importance of a good class leader to aid the pupils in finding meaning from the messages and symbols, which is important in an ever increasingly diverse world.

The research articles presented in this section mainly focus on the use of *American Born Chinese* in the classroom, and can be separated into categories of context, the ability of the teacher to successfully create a varied discussion and tasks surrounding the book and the graphic form of the book itself. The research presented by both Gomes & Carter (2010) and Schieble (2014) comments on the importance of context, preexisting conditions and knowledge of the pupils as well as use within a digital setting. Though not exploring the same issues, both articles point towards the necessity of some previous knowledge of the same issues that Jin and The Monkey King face. While it is unknown to what extent the class of Gomes & Carter (2010) or Schieble (2011) have worked with issues of intercultural competence, shared experiences of exclusions and enabled a better learning outcome compared to the class of Schieble (2011), who specifically lacked these experiences on basis fo their existing privilege. Furthermore, the safe digital learning arena created in Gomes & Carter (2010) that did not quite exist in Schieble (2011) can be linked to the importance and central role of the teacher, as mentioned by Dunn (2018) and in Schieble (2014). The teacher has the power to facilitate a safe learning environment, which in all articles presented seems to be essential in enabling the pupils to share their experiences and discuss the contents of *American Born Chinese* in both a physical and digital context. Moreover, the presented articles also generally note the usefulness of the books graphic form, which has a profound effect in enabling reading motivation and breaking typical conventions of books as difficult or boring. Notably, Dunn (2018) specifically mentions multimodality in his classroom approach to teaching terms related to graphic novels. The articles generally argue for the positive effects of the multimodal aspect of *American Born Chinese* in didactical approaches where decoding of messages is important.

4. **Literary Analysis of *American Born Chinese***

First published in 2006, the graphic novel written by Gene Luen Yang has received numerous awards such as the Michael L Printz award, and is extensively used by teachers and educators alike around the world. Through three seemingly separate but interconnected stories, *American Born Chinese* explores themes of identity, stereotypes, prejudice and exclusion through the stories of Jin, The Anglo-American personification of Jin known as "Danny" and The Monkey King. These topics are highly relevant when discussing identity in the context laid forward by the current educational curriculum (LK20), which specifically connects issues related to intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural issues to the concept of identity, and its construction in relation to others. These intercultural issues are not only recurring but are also major topics that appear throughout the book. As such, it arguably holds great potential in exploring issues of identity in relation to the intercultural competence specifically mentioned in LK20. Additionally, *American Born Chinese* contains a blend and variety of forms, drawing on inspiration from genres related to television, comic books, Chinese folklore and the multicultural background of Yang. There is a certain cultural bridge contained in the book in regards to its form, which holds the potential of a beneficial multimodal approach to literature in the EFL classroom. In order to understand how *American Born Chinese* can be used to approach the concept of identity, this section analyses key themes and characters of the book as well as its graphically mixed form and inspirational sources. The first section of the analysis specifically explores its form and cultural connections, while the second section looks at the themes and topics related to identity and intercultural competence (IC) and *American Born Chinese* as a bildungsroman. The findings of the analysis will then be discussed in light of the curriculum and theoretical framework.

4.1 Intertextuality and graphic form

American Born Chinese contains several narrative styles, drawing on inspiration from TV, comic books, oral stories and the multicultural background of Yang. Notably, the story of The Monkey King is directly inspired by the classic Chinese novel *Journey To the West* by the classical Chinese novelist Wu Cheng'en. The Monkey King is directly derived from the character "Sun Wukong" in *Journey to the West*, a legendary figure who is also a prominent cultural icon in East and South-East Asia. However, some key changes have been made which can be argued to be a nod toward Yang's background, and thus an extension of the books cultural connections and form. Several important plot elements surrounding the story of The Monkey King have been derived directly from the story of Sun Wukong, who just like The Monkey King becomes trapped under a mountain for five hundred years. The key change made by Yang however, is that The Buddha in *Journey to the West* has been replaced by Tze-Yo-Tzuh, the creator of the universe in *American Born Chinese*. This is arguably a nod toward Yang's catholic background (Selles, 2014), as Tze-Yo-Tzuh is very similar to the Christian concept of "God". Additionally, the three vagabonds that the monk Wong-Lai-Tsao meets during his travels are arguably inspired by the three wise men from the bible. They present themselves as emissaries of Tze-Yo-Tzuh, the creator who himself is inspired by the Christian concept of God. They specifically task Wong-Lai-Tsao to carry three packages on his journey to the West, a direct hint to the origin story by Wu Cheng'en. By replacing the Buddha with Tze-Yo-Tzuh and introducing characters directly derived from the three wise men of the Bible, Yang mixes the narrative of *Journey to the West* with the bible, and directly connects his traditional "Western" Catholic faith with the Chinese cultural classic. Additionally, the fact that The Monkey King later joins these emissaries and encounters a situation extremely similar to the birth of Jesus in the Bible suggest a cross-cultural aspect as well, in which characters derived and inspired by Chinese folklore and *Journey to the west* is connected with encounters from the Bible. Consequently a cultural bridge is formed which functions as an extension of Jin's own multicultural and religious identity. Seeing how section 1.2 of the core curriculum emphasises diversity and the understanding of the self in relation with others, the connection implied between different cultural elements allows for the pupil to explore new cultural expressions and elements, while at the same time recognising some of their own. This can potentially help develop an understanding of how their identities connect with others throughout the world, and thus develop awareness of themselves in relation with others.

In addition to the inspiration from Chinese mythological folklore and the authors Catholic background, Yang has also personally stated in an interview (Poonsawat, 2013) that *American Born Chinese* is in part based upon his own experiences while growing up in the U.S. Several of the characters, their stories and experiences of racism are pulled directly from the authors life. The experiences of for example Jin and his struggle of constructing his identity can thus be linked back to Yangs own childhood, which then shows a biographical aspect to the book as well. The fact that *American Born Chinese* takes directly from the authors Catholic faith, his own childhood and *Journey to the west*, which is further inspired by traditional Chinese folklore, mythology and traditions of oral storytelling, shows a complex and layered cultural connections of the book, and by extension a representation of the authors multicultural identity. The varied amount of sources allows the book to draw upon not only a varied amount of cultural expressions from Chinese culture and the Bible, but also personal experiences of intercultural issues such as prejudice, racism and exclusion that Yang faced in his childhood. The book brings elements from across the world together in its three stories, and shows a complex and multilayered cultural connection which results in a strong connection between culture, religion and personal experiences that can be potentially explored in the classroom.

Additionally, it is arguable that the multiple perspectives or narratives present in *American Born Chinese* can enable it to fight the imperialistic notion that has historically surrounded the Chinese identity, as well as the myths of the "Oriental man" and Yellow Peril as mentioned further down in the analysis. Vazquez (2002) makes the point that the Bildung genre of books has traditionally represented one distinctive narrative: "a single protagonist, who moves from unformed childhood toward the emergence of a total personality in adulthood" (Vazquez, 2002, pp. 85–86). As he further argues, this is problematic because it represents the same colonial or imperialistic aspect in which Western or European powers went abroad, but eventually returned home as fully-fledged adults with more experience. In other words, the bildungsroman genre can possibly represent a western or imperalistic literary tradition which revolves around the values of "rationalism, materialism and pragmatism" (p. 90) as core values that develop an individual. This notion of overall development limits the complex identity of characters that are outside the traditional scope of bildung-related literature, such as Jin and his multicultural connection with both typical

"eastern" and "western" narratives. However by including a set of hybrid narratives he describes as "magic" or "spiritual" realism, a story or novel then "destroys the illusion of a unified self endorsed by the Western novel of education. As such, an additional hybrid and "magical" narrative can potentially show the complexity of for example the African continent according to Vazquez (2002), which has often been narrowed down to the socio-political problems that ravage the continent (p. 89). The fantasy aspect of the additional narratives enables a complexity that moves away from the Western-European convention of growth and development of an individual. In the same way, the hybrid narrative of *American Born Chinese* can show the complexity of Jins multicultural and hybrid identity by including the narrative of The Monkey King and Chin-Kee. These characters and their narratives help Jin on his journey toward self-accept and his epiphany of growing up. The superficial properties of Chin-Kee also helps dispel several myths of the "oriental man" or "yellow peril" by placing them in a superficial and overly exaggerated character or setting, thus subconsciously telling the reader that for example the caricature-like nature of Chin-Kee is not real.

The book contains several examples of which the multimodal aspect of the book enables the expression of emotions, thoughts and meaning. One such example is the juxtaposition of Wei-Chen and his monkey identity towards the end of the story (Figure 4.1). By juxtaposing and placing a monochrome panel of Wei-Chen as a monkey next to his street fashion-conscious human form, Wei-Chen's insecurities and excess use of materialistic goods are contrasted with his desire for friendship and belonging. The multimodal combination of monochrome color, expression and lack of dialogue in the middle panel represents the inner feelings of Wei-Chen and his sadness over losing Jin as a friend. His vulnerability and feelings are showed, and contrasted with his more "carefree" human form who is only interested in materialistic goods. The color contrast, expression and lack of dialogue combined creates meaning, and shows an unique expression of human emotions which are arguably more relatable than what conventional written text can portray.

Figure 4.1 (Yang, 2009, p. 229).
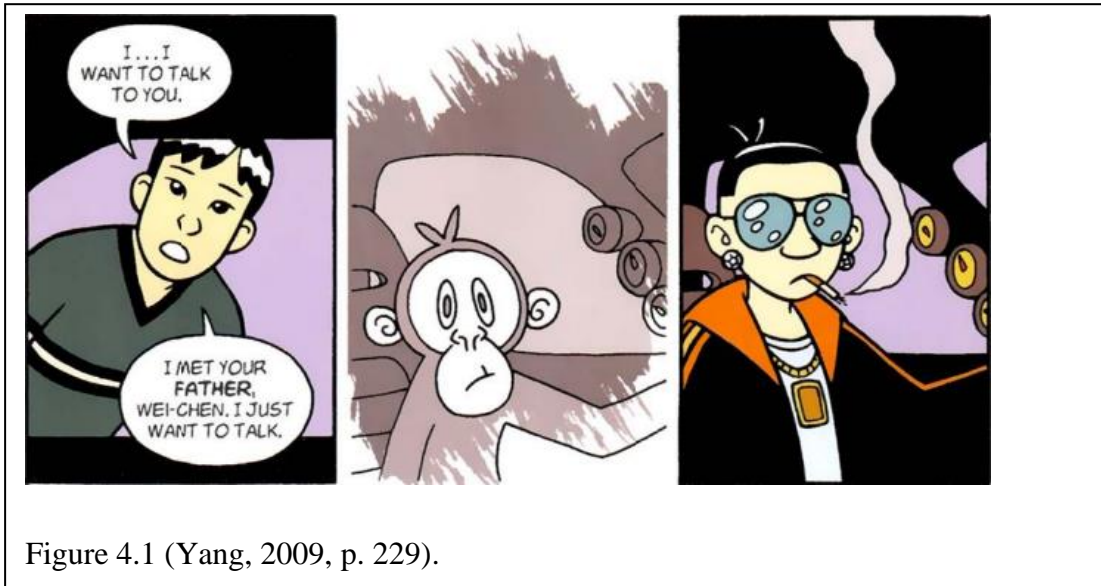
Another example of the book using its multimodal form to emphasise an expression or emotion happens when Wei-Chen removes the sunglasses that he is wearing in the last three panels of the novel, and consequently shows his eyes and meeting the gaze of Jin. The expression on his face changes as well, which contrasts his previous "colder" personality with a smile, signaling a sense of forgiveness and friendship (Figure 4.2). Arguably, there is

Figure 4.2 (Yang, 2009, p. 232)

an interplay of multimodality in these panels as well. The multimodality of the book enables the removal of the sunglasses, facial expression and use of text bubbles to happen at the same time, which adds another layer to their conversation. The sunglasses that originally hide the eyes of Wei-Chen, and their subsequent removal thus shows a willingness by Wei-Chen to meet Jin eye to eye when they are removed, making their conversation much more relateable to the reader.

Moreover, there is a crackling lightning effect that appears every time Jin gets nervous around his love interest Amelia. The crackling effect plays to some degree on the semiotic aspects of multimodality as noted by Rimmereide (2021), and plays on both the audio and visual aspects to represent Jins level of either frustration or confidence. The crackling can both be seen and "heard" through its text of "nnnt!", and represents the jump or "jolt" of his current emotion. Instead of explicitly stating that Jin feels frustrated or confident, the book uses visual cues to portray these emotions, and by extension assisting the reader in "reading" Jin. The visual, audio and use of text at the same time sends a message of emphasis on the current feelings of Jin. This can be further argued by the fact that thunder is a relatively universal symbol, and is known for its loud sounds and "jolting" energy. The universality of thunder as a symbol of something volatile helps etablish the overall mood of Jin, and further adds emphasis on his frustration and confidence in the given panels, and adds another layer of representation to his emotions (Figure 4.3 & Figure 4.4).
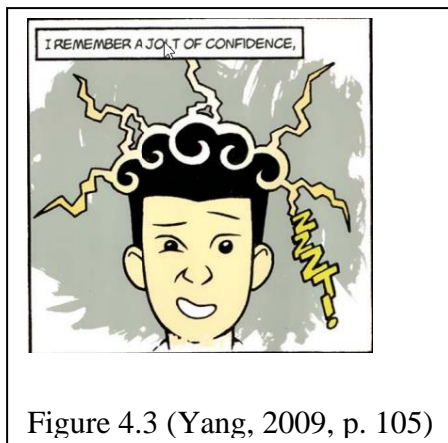
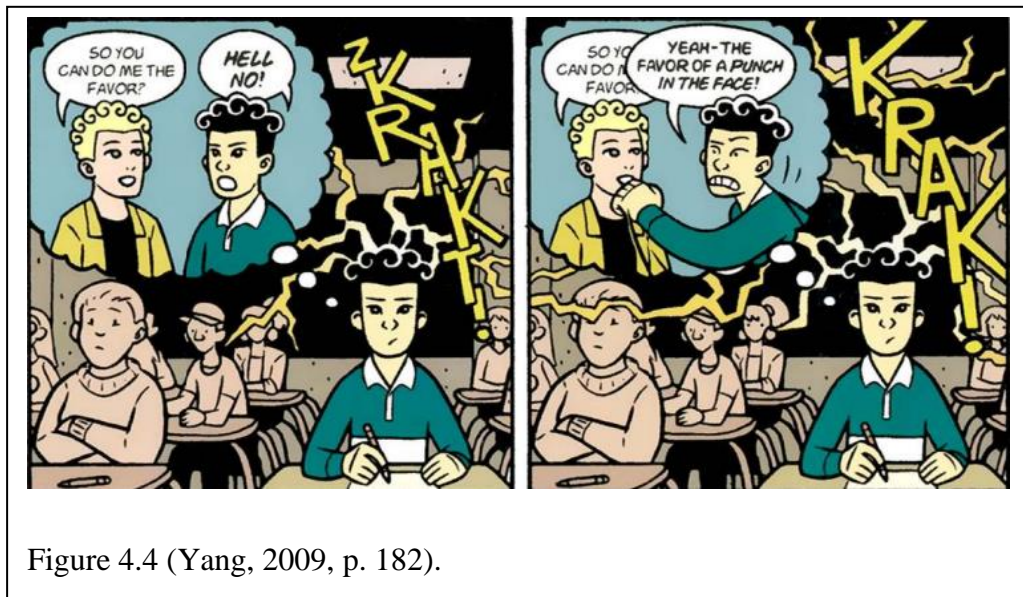Figure 4.3 (Yang, 2009, p. 105)

Figure 4.4 (Yang, 2009, p. 182).

A more subtle multimodal example is the confrontation between Jin and Greg over Ameli. The panels uses visual cues to hint at the double morale and irony of Greg's statement. Specifically, the panel shows visually how Jin and Greg has the exact same hairstyle within the same panel. Nevertheless, Greg comments on how he does not understand Jin because he is a "geek", and mentions his hairstyle as being weird. The text bubble also has the words "geek" and "hair" in bold lettering to emphasise these words as central in their interaction (Figure 4.5). The situation shows the exclusion and racism portrayed by Greg toward Jin, but uses its multimodal form to make a statement about Gregs racism and exclusion, and the irony of the situation.

Figure 4.5 (Yang, 2009, p. 184).

The multimodal aspect and various cultural connections of *American Born Chinese* is especially clear in the sections surrounding Danny and his Chinese cousin Chin-Kee. These sections are presented in a manner similar to that of a television sitcom series, which is in enabled through its multimodal form as a graphic novel and use of sequential, juxtaposed panels and semiotic aspects. Notably, there are forced laugh tracks that appear in the gutter and around the panels every time Chin-Kee does or says something that can be considered racist, stereotypical, or based on prejudice of Chinese identity (Figure 4.6). According to a literary analysis of *American Born Chinese* conducted by Oh (2017), the clapping and laugh tracks scripts the audience into laughing at the overly racist stereotypes portrayed by Chin-Kee and the ridiculousness of his character (Oh, 2017, p. 26). Oh (2017) further argues that these tracks function as a key mechanism in exploring the parts of identity related to masculinity and the social belonging of Danny, and by extension Jin. This argument can be

supported by looking at the specific and out-of-frame laugh tracks which appear during the segments of Chin-Kee. As a character, Chin-Kee represents the absolute worst of racist stereotypes and prejudice concerning that of the Chinese identity. As an extension, he also represents Jins own view of his Chinese identity, and thus his insecurities of his social identity. The laughing tracks then forces the reader to laugh at overly racist and stereotypical representation of Jins identity, in order to show an tell the reader how exaggerated and ridcilous they are. By cutting off the laugh tracks at the exact moment Danny seemingly "defeats" Chin-Kee and The Monkey King reveals himself, it is arguable that the book swiftly "ends" the story of Chin-Kee, and thus extension, Jins insecurities of his Chinese identity. These laugh tracks are then "flipped", as Jin engages in real laughter with Wei-Chen in the last panel while they sit in a café. At this point in the novel, Jin has with help from The Monkey King come to terms with his Chinese identity. As Oh (2017) then points out, the laughing mechanism is flipped, thus changing the narrative from racist stereotypes related to Jins Chinese identity, toward the beginning of self-acceptance (Oh, 2017, pp. 29–30).

Figure 4.6 (Yang, 2009, p. 48).

The laugh tracks also has the function of "disabling" the racist properties of Chin-Kee. As Oh (2017) notes, the laugh tracks forces the reader to specifically focus on, and laugh at the racist, eccentric and vile behaviour of Chin-Kee. Consequently, Chin-Kee and his racist properties are disarmed by focusing on how over-the-top, untrue and ridicilous they are, by using the forced laugh as a tool. As such, the function of the laugh track is specifically to make the reader laugh at Chin-Kee. In contrast, Wei-Chen and Jin shares an authentic laugh together in the last panel of the novel, which signals the "flip" that Oh (2017) discusses, as they laugh with each other, and along with the reader. The laugh track can arguably be shortened down into two functions – laughing *at* Chin-Kee

versus laughing *with* Jin and Wei-Chen. As Chin-Kee arguably functions as the embodiment of Jins social Chinese identity, the "flip" and engagement of real laughter represents Jins beginning and gradual acceptance of his identity, and the fact that he overcomes his insecurities. This contrasts the entire story of Chin-Kee, and thus builds on Jin overcoming his insecurities and self-imposed racist understanding of his social identity and heritage, by specifically engaging in an authentic and shared experience with Wei-Chen. However, it should be noted that the same laugh tracks around the gutter in the panels of Chin-Kee are not the same as the more subtle and less obvious laugh that Jin and Wei-Chen share in the café. Oh (2017) does not mention the lack of direct connection between the laugh shared between Jin and Wei-Chen, and the sitcom style laugh surrounding Chin-Kee. As such, it is arguable that some critical and close examination of the story might be required for a reader to find this link in a didactic approach of identity using the novel.

Both Hathaway (2009) and Oh (2017) mention and discuss the intertextual relationship of *American Born Chinese* in their analyses, though with somewhat different focal points. Whereas Oh (2017) specifically explores laughter as a key mechanism between the graphic and sitcom format, Hathaway (2009) focuses on intertextuality and the possibility of ownership among new readers. The argument in the analysis presented by Hathaway (2009) argues that the laughing scene as previously noted by Oh (2017), replicates that of typical TV sitcoms, which then represents the novels intertextuality. Seeing as *American Born Chinese* alternates between three different stories, the reader is forced to make sense of the three seemingly random perspectives in addition to the text referenced along the way: *Faust, Journey to the West* and the bible in addition to nontraditional forms of text such as comics, manga, Youtube and TV sitcoms (Hathaway, 2009, p. 41). The main argument by Hathaway (2009) seems to be based on the interplay between typically cultural "low" and "high" forms of literature, while using the intertextuality from both traditional and new forms of text to create a sense of familiarity and ownership of *American Born Chinese*. As most pupils are familiar with genres present in the book such as sitcoms, Youtube and the comic/manga, readers might be less reluctant to look into the deeper meaning, motives and themes presented through the three separate story arcs. Consequently, it is the intertextuality of the book which then allows the reader to engage with characters such as Jin, Wei-Chen, Danny, Chin-Kee and The Monkey King, and create room for critical reflection of their properties, and what they represent as characters.

As Hathaway (2009) shows, the intertextuality of *American Born Chinese* includes a varied amount of multimedia formats present in the book (p. 41). These arguably adds to the already established cultural bridge of the book, and show that the graphic novel itself connects to not only various cultural expressions, but also several multimedia formats. *American Born Chinese* then arguably plays on the pupils familiarity and ownership over these genres and the multimedia formats to create a more relatable reading experience, toward the goal of fostering knowledge related to identity. By bringing unique cultural contexts and multimedia formats such as Youtube, manga, comics and the sitcom genre into the fold, *American Born Chinese* arguably takes on more than just the cultural inspiration from *Journey to the West*, the bible and the childhood experiences of Yang in its stories presented.

The multimodal aspect of *American Born Chinese* allows for emotions, actions and feelings to be represented in a way that conventional literature is not able to. Through the presented examples above, emotions, thoughts and the "fuel" behind each character are portrayed. *American Born Chinese* is arguably also very much compatible with an approach influenced by that of multiliteracy. As the approach of multiliteracies takes into account the increasingly diverse cultural contexts of communication and the increase of multimedia formats used in communication, the book arguably fits into the category of texts that can be used in an approach influenced by multiliteracies as well. The diversity of the book is shown through its various cultural inspirational sources, while the range of multimedia formats present in the stories gives a familiar platform from which to explore characters such as Jin, The Monkey King, Wei-Chen and Chin-Kee. Its use of several semiotic aspects at once also plays into its multimodality, and will assist in developing multiliteracy among the pupils in the classroom, which will then further help in the didactic use of the book in the classroom and "capturing the essence" of its contents related to intercultural issues, awareness and identity development. As pupils find new ways to communicate, the use of texts or literature compatible with such approaches are becoming increasingly more important in our society. The ways we communicate are by nature multimodal and should arguably be represented in the development of pupil identity and the aim toward the curricular goals presented.

The analysis so far of the form and cultural connections contained in the novel suggests that the multimodal and multiliteracy aspect of the book enables it to better "capture the essence" of the stories contained. Through its intertextuality and use of graphic and visual cues, the book creates an additional layer of meaning on top of what conventional literature is able to, simply by using several semiotic aspects of multimodality at once. This layer thus shows the thoughts, emotions and feelings of the characters presented, and creates a whole new way in which to use the book in the classroom. As McCloud (1993) argues, the message of the comic book or graphic novel is instantaneous, as "pictures are received information. We need no formal education to "get the message" (p. 49). In contrast, conventional literature requires the reader to be familiar to some degree with words, letters, language and reading itself to make meaning out of a book. The fact that the reader can for example visually see Wei-Chen's sad and monochrome monkey form in contrast with his street fashion-conscious human form, or Jins reaction to the prejudice and racism he experiences, makes it easier for the reader to understand the meaning and message behind each panel. Additionally, the several narratives introduced helps break the limiting and western-oriented aspect of the bildungsroman. The use of superficial and additional narratives through the stories of The Monkey King or Chin-Kee enables a more in-line approach toward Jins complex identity. Furthermore, this also builds on what McCloud (1993) argues to be our fragmented perception (p. 62). As an example, a conventional book could write that Chin-Kee is based on racist stereotypes and prejudice, and describe his looks. To visually see him as a character however, lets us build the visual semiotic aspect and connect it to "Yellow Peril" (with the necessary context and knowledge at hand) and the discrimination, prejudice and racism that East/South-East Asians have faced for decades. His similarity to the racist propaganda aimed toward those with an Asian identity enables a much more in-depth reading of him as a character, and his connection with Jins insecurities and rejection of identity. The intertextuality of the book and its use of various cultural contexts in its inspiration allows the book to create a sense of familiarity over the issues that for example Jin experiences, by giving the reader a relatable window into the unique identity, but not necessarily unique struggles of Jin. Pupils will more than likely recognize the multimedia formats present as argued in the justification of multiliteracy by The New London Group (2000). This will then help create a bridge into the unique cultural contexts presented through the novels intertextuality, allowing for exploration of the many intercultural components and issues of identity that are presented through the characters and their stories.

4.2 Identity, Racism and Prejudice

Identity is a singificant theme in *American Born Chinese*. Issues related to identity appears throughout the novel, and brings the story of The Monkey King and Jin together. Both characters endure a crisis of identity, in which they eventually develop as characters and comes to term with their respective identities despite the many challenges they face of prejudice and racism. Because of this, the graphic novel arguably fits into the genre of "bildungsroman", as this genre of literature depicts and explores the development of the protagonist over the course of a book (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022). The word "bildung" also appears in the educational curriculum as the overarching goal of Norwegian education, and concerns the all-round development of the pupil, in which development of identity is arguably an important aspect. The issues of identity surrounding Jin and The Monkey King are directly connected with their development as characters and eventual self-accept, which subsequently links both characters back to *American Born Chinese* as a bildungsroman, as well as the overarching "Bildung" goal of Norwegian education. This section of the analysis explores the themes, metaphors and examples from the book related to the identity formation of both characters, and their link back to *American Born Chinese* as a bildungsroman.

Both characters experience some form of exclusion which results in their subsequent rejection of identity. The Monkey Kings identity crisis and rejection stems from the exclusion he is faced with at the party in the greater heavens. The refusal of his entry functions as a turning point of him as a character, which sends him down a spiral of self-loathing and rejection of his monkey identity (Yang, 2009, pp. 14–15). Notably, he becomes insecure of his monkey fur smell, forces his subjects to wear shoes, and transform himself to become stronger (Figure 4.7).
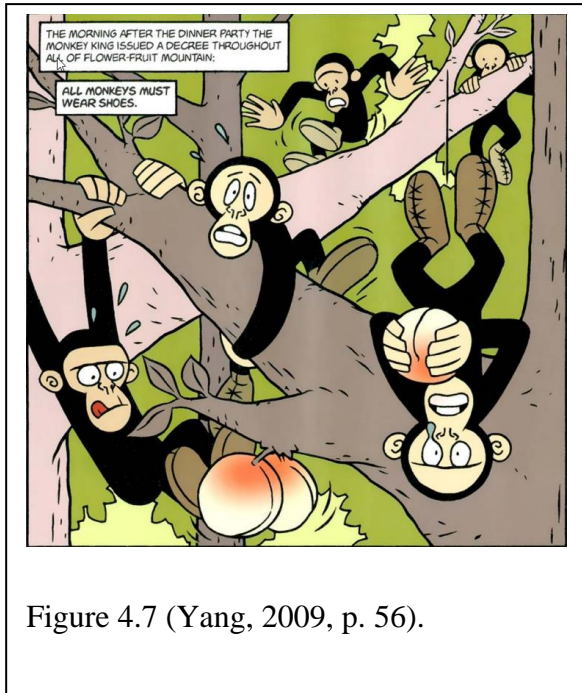
Figure 4.7 (Yang, 2009, p. 56).

His self-loathing and outright refusal of his monkey identity is made especially clear when he also reject Tze-Yo-Tzuh by stating that he is above being a monkey (Figure 4.8). The rejection from his fellow gods and deities, which is continued as he is mocked and "sentenced to death" by the greater heavens, makes him feel less than equal to the other gods. Consequently, this results in him transforming himself become stronger so he can defeat them. This is arguably shown when he proclaims his name to "The Great Sage, Equal of Heaven" (p. 68) thus completely ignoring his title as "The Monkey King". Additionally, his transformation through the four disciplines of invulnerability (p. 57-58) to become even stronger than he is then shows his desire to reject and move away from his identity as a monkey. Combined, these moments represent his gradual rejection of his identity, rooted in the exclusion he faces and his wish to be equal to the other deities.
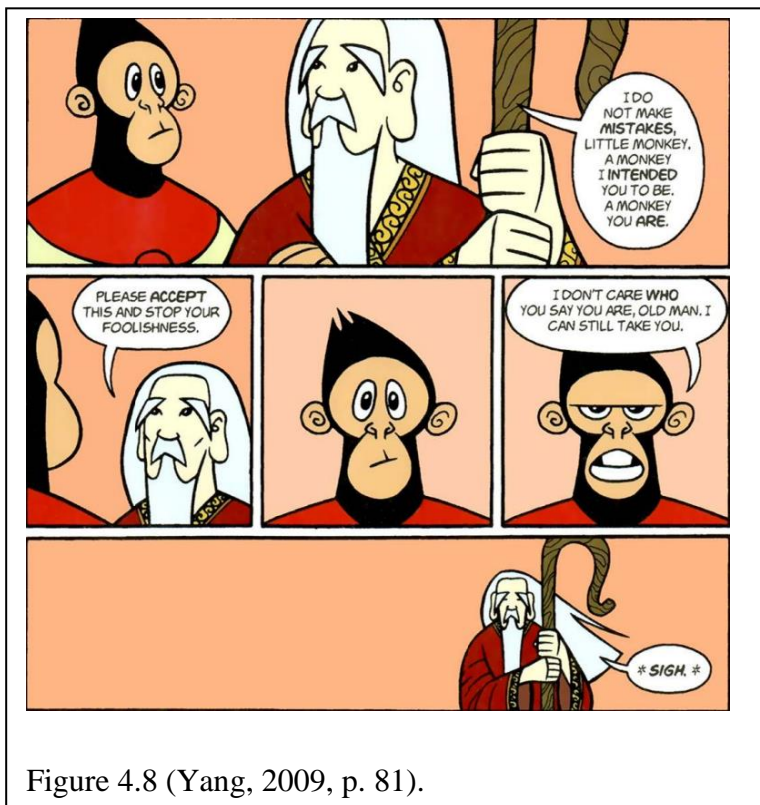

Figure 4.8 (Yang, 2009, p. 81).

Although both Jin and The Monkey King experience exclusion because of their respective identities, the issue of direct racism is far more relevant in the story surrounding Jin, and his struggle with his Chinese identity. While the crisis of identity The Monkey King experiences is primarily rooted in the events of the party in the greater heavens, Jin experiences a form of exclusion which is more constant, and comes from several characters over the course of his story. His first experience with racism and prejudice occurs as early as on his first day in school, as the teacher mispronounces his name as "Jing Jang" and explains to the class that he is from China despite being born in San Francisco, and that his family "probably stopped doing that when they came to the United States" when questioned about the practice of eating cats and dogs (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 (Yang, 2009, p. 31).

As shown, not only does Jin have to face prejudice and racism from his peers but the teachers as well, which contributes in reinforcing the stereotypes that makes Jin actively enforce the rejection of his own identity and language. The stereotypes that the pupils bring from home are strengthened by the lack of knowledge from the teachers, thus making Jin's experiences in school even more difficult. The constant negative reinforcement of his Chinese identity then results in him internalising his anger and outright refusal of his Chinese identity, which he is unable to express until Wei-Chen enrolls in his class. The negative reinforcement is then shown through his refusal to speak Mandarin with Wei-Chen, until they find common social ground in which he becomes more open to his Chinese identity.

Figure 4.10 (Yang, 2009, p. 37).

In both cases, they experience a form of racism and prejudice directly tied to their identities. Both characters are judged solely based on their innate qualities, outer appearance and properties of which they are unable to change. The Monkey King is judged solely on his identity as "just a monkey", similar to how Jin is judged exclusively for being Chinese. This further evident in the panel panel with Greg, Amelia and Jin (p. 180). Specifically, Greg remarks that "He's a nice guy, but he's kind of a geek. I mean, what's with the hair"? (Yang, 2009, p. 184). Despite Jin having the exact same hairstyle as Greg, he is nevertheless unable to see Jin through their shared properties or what they have in common. Instead, he solely focuses on his lack of popularity and social status as an "outsider", which is evidently rooted in his Chinese identity. In the example of the Monkey King, he is referred to as "just a monkey" despite being one of the most powerful beings in the universe. Evidently, the identity crisis of both characters stems from the rejection of their identity, which is rooted in the exclusion they face precisely because of the judgement, which is further rooted in marginalizing forces such as prejudice and racism.

The rejection that both Jin and The Monkey King experience can be tied directly to the historical notion of identity and the outdated understanding of identity and culture and its properties as presented in the theoretical framework by Schachter & Rich (2011), Côté (2006), Coulmas (2019), Reichl (2013) and Giampara (2004). Their shared notion of identity as somewhat overextended in its use as a term, and the historical limitations of the term to a few distinctive aspects of identity in its entirety, is specifically what both Jin and The Monkey King experience. Because of the prejudice, racism and exclusion they face, their entire identities are singled down to that of "Monkey" or "Chinese", and the stereotypes and prejudice that follow these simple and limited aspects of their identities. Subsequently, characters such as Greg or the deities around The Monkey King are unable to see them for who they actually are, as they specifically focus on the innate qualities and outer appereances. They see the properties of for example Jin through a lens of what separates

"them from us", instead of focusing on their similarities as for example "deities" for The Monkey King, or "teenager", and "classmate" for Jin. As the theoretical framework presents, the properties of identities are in constant motion and moves across typical territorial connotations. Identity is not limited to simply "Chinese" and "Monkey", but rather the properties that we share across our social identities, groups and vast networks. Through interaction, our identities develop as we pull from the resources available within our networks. Unfortunately for Jin and The Monkey King, these interactions are limited to these single properties of "Chinese" and "Monkey" by their surroundings, which consequently makes them actively reject their own identity and transform themselves to fit in with the majority.

The subsequent transformations that both characters endure are hinted on early in the graphic novel as an important theme in the book, and appear constantly and throughout the book in the stories provided. The first example of transformation as a theme occurs early with the transformer toys that Jin plays with as a child, and his encounter with the Old Chinese woman that tells him that he can have anything, if he is willing to sacrifice his soul.
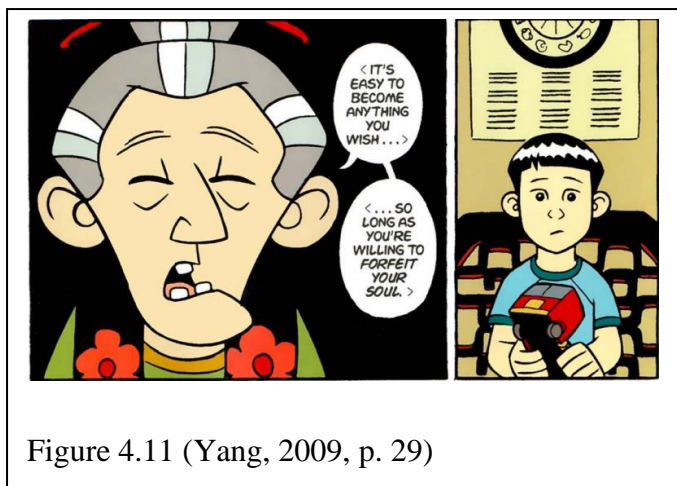

Figure 4.11 (Yang, 2009, p. 29)

The key transformation related to Jin occurs after the confrontation with Greg, from which he transforms into Danny. Because of the racism, prejudice and rejection he is constantly faced with throughout the book, Jin truly believes that becoming Danny will fix his problems. Danny is by all means an Anglo-American teenager with light skin and hair. From Jins perspective, there is no reason that transforming into Danny would not give him the popularity and social identity that he wishes for. However, his then subsequent "sacrifice" and transformation into Danny, the Anglo-American kid who "has it all" is spoiled because of the personification of his Chinese identity - Chin-Kee. Similarly to Jin, The Monkey King transforms into a more powerful being and believes that his transformation will fix his crisis of identity. His arrogance eventually catches up with him, and he is locked under a mountain

of stone for five hundred years by Tze-Yo-Tzuh, who personally reminds him of his duties as the king of the monkeys.

The theme of transformation as portrayed through the characters of Jin and The Monkey King functions as a metaphor, and by extension a representation of their epiphanies related to growing up. Both characters endure a transformation in an attempt to reject their respective identities. They feel excluded and out of place, and then subsequently transform physically into a new form or identity. In both cases, some remnants of their old life comes back to haunt them. For The Monkey King it is Tze-Yo-Tzuh who reminds him of his duties, and how he was created to be the king of the monkeys specifically. For Jin, it is Chin-Kee, who represents the racist stereotypes of the Chinese identity, and by extension his perspective of his Chinese identity that has been reinforced over time by his peers. Their transformations and change of physical form thus represents their struggles of identities, and the naturally occurring wish to have friends and fit in. Consequently, it is the last transformation that represents the epiphany, and by extension their eventual self-accept after a somewhat long and perilous journey of identity development. As they are unable to escape their "past identities", they find ways to accept them through their epiphanies of transformation. For The Monkey King, this occurs as he goes on the journey to the West with Wong Lai-Tsao and fulfils his role as the emissary of Tze-Yo-Tzuh. For Jin, this moment comes in the final reveal of The Monkey King as Chin-Kee, and the following interactions with Wei-Chen to seek forgiveness and repair their friendship.

Their transformation and its overall function as a metaphor for their epiphany can arguably be linked back to the curriculum in several sections, as well as the overarching goal of Norwegian education called "Bildung". Notably, the "growing up" aspect of their transformation can be explored in light of the interdisciplinary topics related to Health & Life skills, as well as Democracy and Citizenship. In regards to Health & Life skills, the development of a positive self-image and confidence within ones identity is emphasized as a central component in the overall development of the pupil. By exploring the self-image, causes of exclusion and the journey of for example Jin, the reader will be able to get a glimpse into a unique perspective of identity development, and his journey toward a form of self-accept and improved self-image. As Jin and The Monkey King alike eventually manages to develop a more positive understanding of the self towards the end of the novel, their

stories can offer an alternative way in reading about how to overcome what Schachter & Galliher (2018) refers to as "forces of marginalization" such as racism, stereotypes and prejudice of others' identities. In terms of democracy and Citizenship, one relatable aspect could be its emphasis on fostering knowledge related to minority rights and experiences, and subsequently skills necessary to see social issues from new perspectives. Through exploration of Jin and his struggles, one can arguably build and help develop the pupils ability to see issues related to identity through his perspective. This also links back to the fragmented perception as noted previously by McCloud (1993), as the exploration arguably enhances their horizon and further understanding of identity struggles. Despite the fact that the characters presented are fictional, the cultural bridge present in the book connects these characters back to Yang's personal experiences, which gives them a layer or aspect of truth despite the fact they are fictional characters. This will also help the development of knowledge related to interaction, which is, as the analysis shows, a central component in the construction of identity. By "attaching" Jins perspective on to their own, they will add his experiences to that of their own, which can aid in developing the necessary knowledge related to intercultural awareness and the eventual intercultural interaction with other identities. Arguably, the experiences of Jin in relation with racism can more than likely be connected to other minorities as well, which makes their stories relateable across several cultural contexts. As these interdisciplinary topics play a central role within Bildung, the exploration of the transformation shown in *American Born Chinese* can help foster and develop knowledge related to identity across curricular goals, aspects, and sections, thus playing directly into the "all-round" development of the pupil and Bildung.

The interplay between the social, personal and ego levels of identity as noted by Schachter & Rich (2011) and Côté (2006), plays directly into the theme of transformation and development of identity in *American Born Chinese*. Specifically, this interplay can be explored in the classroom to better understand the causes behind the transformation and its meaning as a metaphor for the growing up aspect of the book. .The ego level of identity functions as middle ground between the social and personal levels, and further emphasies the individual ability of "sameness" across time while developing their social and personal levels of identity. Notably, Jins crisis of identity is rooted in his difficulties in keeping this "sameness" over time, as he is the target of prejudice and racism because of both his personal identity, as well as his social identity. Because of the constant negative

reinforcement, Jin then begins to relate his Chinese identity to the prejudice and racism that he experiences, and then starts to also reinforce the same negative stereotypes onto himself. He then desires to get rid of his "Chinese" property within his subjective and objective belonging of his social identity. In a sense, Jin receives the automatic label of "Chinese", just like The Monkey King receives his label of "monkey". This causes both characters to break away from their social identities through the attempted transformation, in order to remove the label and thus what they believe is the root cause for their exclusion. As Schachter & Rich (2011) note, an individual will naturally over time break away, or change their subjective and objective belonging. Because of their forced transformation, both Jin and The Monkey King are unable to develop their identity naturally, as their transformation is forced. Jins "old" Chinese identity and The Monkey King's purpose come back and haunt them despite their supposedly successful transformation.

Additionally, as his personal identity traits are narrowed down by his peers to the one static aspect of "Chinese", Jin wishes to change to better fit in with the majority. Through his self-imposed and forced transformation, his entire personal identity is changed so he can fit in with a new social identity that is more in line with the majority Anglo-American culture around him. As such, the transformation results in a "break" in his ego identity as the sameness is no longer kept.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the social identity of "Asian" that Suzy Nakamura, Wei-Chen and Jin share is rooted in their mutual exclusion, shared experiences and cultural context. Their social identities are grouped together because of their "relative" similarity. This builds on the previously presented outdated understanding of identity in the theoretical framework, from which their collective identity becomes "Asian" despite for example Jin being born in San Francisco and Wei-Chen in Taiwan. This can be seen in **figure**, in which a group of teenagers passing by refers to the entire group with several slurs referring to notably both Chinese and Vietnamese peoples. As such, this builds on their subjective understanding of the self, and creates a solidarity between one another through their friendship and the marginalization experienced by members of the dominant cultural group. As the analysis of the curriculum shows, knowledge related to intercultural awareness and the ability to see other perspectives are key in interaction to further build on intercultural competence as an essential component in fostering identity. The example of the use of ethnic

slurs can be used to explore topics related to marginalization such as racism, and prejudice toward minority social identities, and create much needed reflection of interaction from a majority perspective.

The third story presented in *American Born Chinese* named Chin-Kee is perhaps the most relevant character regarding stereotypes, racism and prejudice. He is a living and breathing accentuated racist stereotype of the Chinese identity, and comes to visit Danny each year, thus making his life incredibly difficult. In a critique of the existing literature surrounding *American Born Chinese*, Smith (2014) describes the many similarities between Chin-Kee and early modern pop culture related to Asian and Chinese identity. Smith notes how Chin-Kee is a monstrously exaggerated concatenation of every popular cultural stereotype of Asian and Asian Americans over the last two centuries" (Smith, 2014, p. 2), and has a strong similarity to certain modern, and unironically racist depictions of Asian Americans in political cartoons and televised media (Smith, 2014, p. 4). Additionally, Smith (2004) also argues how Chin-Kee subsequently represents the many "negative aspects" of different Asian identities, which are thrusted upon those who carry them unless their identities are actively reinvented. Smith further notes how both Wei-Chen, Jin and The Monkey King are all in a similar fashion afraid of having their identities thrust upon them, as they represent the negative aspects (p. 2). Based on the argument presented, it is further deductible that The Monkey King, Wei-Chen and Jin all actively reinvent themselves through the transformation noted earlier, similarly to how many Asian identities, who in a similar way must actively reinvent themselves to avoid negative aspects and prejudices associated with their identities. In regards of this active reinvention, Smith (2014) uses the word "Oriental man" to describe the representation of Asians in both propaganda and pop culture over the last two centuries. To an extent, it is also arguable that the image of Chin-Kee represents this very myth, which Yang and his contemporaries thus actively fight by creating such a ridiculous and over-the-top character as Chin-Kee. By actively reinventing themselves through the transformation, Jin and The Monkey King thus avoids their identities and by extension, the exclusion and rejection they face. Moreover, by including the previous argument presented by Oh (2017) of laughter as a key mechanism in fighting these stereotypes, it is even further arguable that Yang fights the "oriental man" myth by specifically forcing the reader to laugh at these accentuated racist stereotypes and properties of Chin-Kee.

The properties of Chin-Kee are historically rooted in Western-oriented prejudice and racism, as shown by Smith (2014). As Smith (2014) notes, these properties represent a mythical which most of these racist depictions have historically relied upon. More specifically, the appearance of Chin-Kee resembles that of the "coolie" immigrant workers that arrived from China into the U.S. during the 19th century and beyond. The "coolie" worker is a part of the "Yellow Peril", also known as the "Western fears that Asians, in particular the Chinese, would invade their lands and disrupt Western values, such as democracy, Christianity, and technological innovation" (BGSU University Libraries, 2023). Notably, his name is a wordplay on the word "Chinky" or "Chink", an ethnic slur referring to a Chinese person. He is unable to pronounce English words correctly, and speaks in an extremely accentuated and downright ridiculous manner using stereotypical "Chinese" phrases (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12 (Yang, 2009, p. 49)

In addition to his language, Chin-Kee also wears historical Chinese clothing, dons an old Chinese hairstyle known as "queue", has a yellow skin color, squinted eyes, wide and large front teeth The main issue with the view of "Yellow peril" is the fact that it stems from notions of white supremacy, a support of colonisation of non-Western nations and a form of "manifest destiny" in which those who were not of primarily Anglo-American origin were looked down on. Frayling (2014) describes how the European or "western" view of the Chinese identity was often associated with that of "demons" or "badly behaved children", and the coming "antagonism" between the Asiatics and the Eastern peoples (Frayling, 2014,

p. 233). This description can be easily tied to Chin-Kee, who behaves in the same way that the racist propaganda surrounding Yellow Peril would have us believe.

Building on this, Smith (2014) notes the myth of the "Oriental man" who from the 1930s and onward became a sort of representative for all Asian men in the U.S. The "Oriental man" builds partly on the looks of the typical Chinese coolie immigrant worker, but also that of other Asian identities. Notably, Smith mentions the Japanese during WW2, caricature of Chinese immigrants during the early 19th century and Asian characters such as the "Oriental supervillain" Fu-Manchu, who appeared frequently in early modern television and popular culture (Smith, 2014, p. 3). One example of the "Oriental man" myth is when the trio of Suzy, Jin and Wei-Chen is both referred to as "gooks" and "chinks" by two boys passing by (Figure 4.13). In this specific example, they formed a trio on the grounds of their common Asian identity in which they can find common ground and protect each other. Consequently, they are targeted with ethnic slurs referring to both the Vietnamese and the Chinese which portrays an extension of the "One Asian Identity" myth within the "Oriental man".
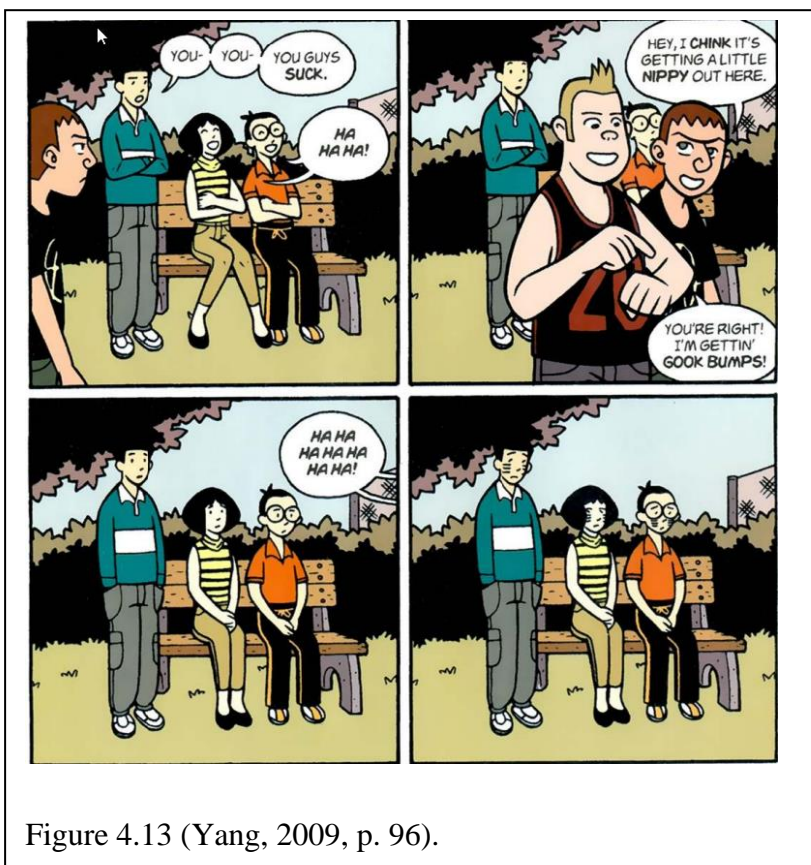

Figure 4.13 (Yang, 2009, p. 96).

Smith (2014) then further argues that these myths blended and confused all Asians under the genre of "Oriental man" who, among other misdeeds, behaves such as Chin-Kee. This is supported by the fact that Chin-Kee also behaves in a ridiculous and overly predatory manner. As an example, he comments on Dannys love interest as shown in figure 4.14

Figure 4.14 (Yang, 2009, p. 50).
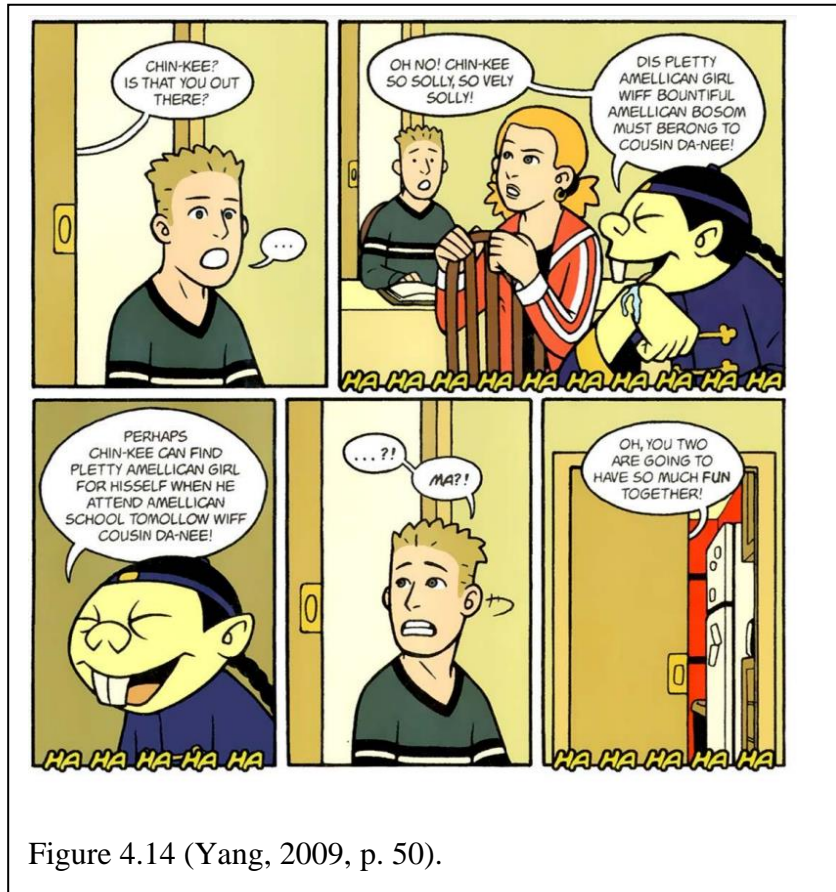
Specifically, Chin-Kee mentions the ancient Chinese practice of binding feet which has since been outlawed. By extension, he represents the stereotype of the "Oriental man" who according to Smith (2014), sexualises American women. The previously mentioned looks of Chin-Kee featuring yellow skin, slanted eyes, and bucked teeth, as well as his clothing and hairstyle means he embodies the myth of the "Oriental man", who itself represents the often demonic, racist propaganda of the East-Asian immigrant worker in popular culture and modern television. By scripting the audience to laugh at the over exaggerated stereotypes and his predatory behaviour, Yang actively fights the historical racism inherit in Chin-Kee by poking fun of him as a character, and mocking him through the very accentuated properties that build him. Yang has also "flavoured" these stereotypes through Chin-Kee's

ridiculousness, and by adding cliché names such as "General Tsao Rooster Punch", "Peking Strike", and "Hunan Style" to the moves during the fight (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15 (Yang, 2009, p. 211).

These words are taken from that of "typical" Chinese names and words, and thus add a sense of ridiculousness to both Chin-Kee and the fight itself. Despite Chin-Kee being smart and skilled in martial arts, he is still "flavoured" with the myth of the "Oriental Man", which is the very label that Jin receives from his peers and subsequently tries to avoid through transformation and rejection.

In addition to the link between Chin-Kee and the "Oriental man" myth, Chin-Kee as a character also embodies an interesting set of contradictions surrounding his exaggerated stereotypical properties. Chin-Kee seems to be highly knowledgeable and skilled in different subjects, as shown when he accompanies Danny to class. He is able to answer most of the questions from the teacher in subjects such as geography, biology and mathematics. Additionally, he seems to be quite skilled in the arts of martial arts as shown through his rigor in fighting Danny, and use of stereotypical "named" martial arts moves and techniques (Yang, 2009, pp. 207–210). Despite the fact that these qualities can be viewed in a positive

light, they still represent the denial and almost disdain that Jin has for his Chinese identity. These can also be tied to the "model minority myth", which is asserts that the Asian American is smart, hard working, family oriented and willing to assimilate fast (Ball & Hartlep, 2017, p. 2). As Ball & Hartlep (2017) then further builds, this stereotype might at first glance, seem positive. However, the stereotype then reinforces the idea that every Asian or Asian American shares these values, which means that those who for example do not excel in school might feel a form of disappointment and shame as they do not fulfil this stereotype actively (p. 2-3). The fact that Chin-Kee carries these stereotypes shows that he not only represents the more obvious historical stereotypes and characteristics represented in the "Oriental Man" or from "Yellow Peril" but arguably also a set of more modern stereotypes related to Asian immigration in the twenty-first century. The subsequent multi-layered representation of stereotypes in Chin-Kee as a character can then be explored in fostering intercultural awareness and other relevant skills and abilities related to identity development in the EFL classroom.

The story of Chin-Kee and his properties also demonstrates how hurtful and absurd the stereotypes in general can be. Notably, the fact that Chin-Kee appears after Jins transformation into Danny makes it clear that Chin-Kee represent Jin's insecurities of his Chinese identity, as he is a personification of the constant reinforcement of the prejudice and stereotypes that are highly accentuated and exaggerated. The connection between Chin-Kee, stereotypes and the model minority myth then functions as an extension of Jins insecurities, crisis of identity and difficulties of fitting in. As Jin is bullied over time for his Chinese identity, Chin-Kee and all that he is and represents essentially becomes how Jin views himself: as the stereotypical and racist prejudice he has to face every day by his peers, and a personification of his Chinese identity and that of the "yellow peril" and "oriental man". Consequently, Jin reinforces and internalises the racism and stereotypes, leading to his crisis of identity and self-doubt, despite the fact that he is not at fault. His view of his own cultural roots and identity turned towards the stereotypical and racist characteristics which are placed upon him by those around him. To further build on this argument, the last panels arguably show a slight disconnect from his Chinese identity. As he sits down in the Chinese café and attempts to order, he struggles to read the menu and tries to order the sentence that says "Cash Only" (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16 (Yang, 2009, p. 226).

The panels show that Jin does not actually know how to read Mandarin, and replies to the server in English. As such, it is arguably a slight hint of the disconnect from his Chinese identity. Over the course of the book, his main reinforcement of his Chinese identity has come through rejection, prejudice, stereotypes and racism. Essentially, Chin-Kee is how Jin views his own identity. As Yang specifically exaggerates him and uses the laughter as a key function in pointing out the ridiculousness of him as, it is then arguable that exploration of Chin-Kee and the racist stereotypes he portrays can be explored in the EFL classroom to show how damaging stereotypes in general can be for the individual, both on a social and personal level. Pupils will be exposed to extreme stereotypes which do not represent Jin at all, thus bridging their similarities between Jin and themselves as for example "normal" relatable teenagers or young adults, and contrasting them with the absurdity of Chin-Kee and other racist stereotypes to portray their possible damage on an individual.

This literary of *American Born Chinese* has primarily focused on its form and cultural bridge between the various presented mediums, literature and contexts, as well as the themes related to identity as portrayed in the novel. The first section of the analysis shows that the form of the novel extends further than its graphic form – and includes several mediums ranging from TV sitcoms to Youtube, Chinese folklore and famous literary works such as The Bible, *Faust* and *Journey To the West*. As such, the form of the graphic novel includes cultural contexts pulled from the authors life, in addition to a series of relatable multimodal forms. Combined, these add to the overall complex cultural connection of the book, which then allows it to draw on these for a relateable reading context in both its form and cultural context within an approach inspired by multiliteracy. By playing on the intertextuality and

familiarity of these mediums, readers might be able to find ownership and a sense of familiarity which might be helpful in critically exploring the themes of identity and motivating readers. Additionally, the multimodal form of the book creates the possibility of an alternative multimodal approach in fostering knowledge related to identity and culture, which is often considered a complex topic by researchers and teachers. Through the use of visual cues, the reader can interact with the text and find new ways to understand the struggles of Jin and The Monkey King, thus building on their "fragmented perception" and expanding on their knowledge of issues related to identity and intercultural competence.

The second section of the analysis focused on the theme of identity, and the issues related to identity and intercultural competence as they appear throughout the novel. As the analysis show, both characters endure a crisis of identity rooted in the exclusion they face, which results in their transformation and feelings of rejection. The main issue surrounding identity as a theme is how the identities of Jin and The Monkey King are singled down to specific aspects of their identities such as "Chinese" and "Monkey" respectively. This represents an outdated perspective on identity as noted by Reichl (2013) and Giampara (2004), who argue that the components that make up identity and cultural understanding are always in flux and transition, thus not limited to the stable categories that for example Jin is judged through. Notably, this judgement and constant negative reinforcement cause the "break" in the ego level of identity, which provides the opportunity to explore the "forces of marginalization" as a part of the conceptual framework of IdEd by Schachter & Galliher (2018) in order to widen the horizon further and build on the "fragmented perspective" of the pupils as McCloud (1993) consequently notes. As this thesis will later argue in the didactic analysis and discussion of the book, building on the fragmented perspective of the pupils will be extremely valuable in promoting skills related to the development of identity. Skills and mindsets connected to for example intercultural awareness will be beneficial in the inevitable interaction with other identities, which can be promoted through the exploration of such forces of marginalization and the "break" and how these affect Jin and The Monkey King. As the analysis shows, Chin-Kee as a character can arguably serve such a function well, as he is built on a range of racist stereotypes and propaganda specifically aimed at those with an Asian background and identity. His representation of various stereotypes through his similarities of the "Oriental Man" and "Yellow Peril", as well as the "model minority" myth creates a character that can be explored, and thus helpful in understanding how damaging

and hurtful racism and stereotypes can be on the individual and social identity through constant negative reinforcement.

Furthermore, the bildungsroman aspect of the book portrays the crisis of identity that both characters go through, which then relates back to their transformations as epiphanies of them "growing up", their struggles and journeys toward self-acceptance and the racist and caricature-like properties of Chin-Kee. As previously shown, several sections of the curriculum can be tied to the identity development presented through the characters of Jin and The Monkey King, which then adds to the overall construction of identity, and identity as an essential component in the overall development of the pupil. This can be further related back to the Bildung aspect of the book, and Bildung as the overarching goal of Norwegian education and the interplay between various curricular goals in the overall development of pupil identity.

5. Discussion

The literary analysis has highlighted some of the most central aspects of *American Born Chinese* in terms of its graphic form and contents related to identity and intercultural competence. As this section shows, *American Born Chinese* provides plenty of opportunities to foster and develop identity through its graphic form, connection with Bildung, and by exploration of the identity crises of characters such as Jin and The Monkey King. Consequently, each of these characters provides unique opportunities in the development of identity, most notably through interaction which the analysis and theoretical framework suggests is a central and key factor in the development of identity and intercultural competence.

The purpose of this section is to further build on the findings of the literary analysis and previous research, by examining some of the didactic considerations and implications of using *American Born Chinese* in the EFL classroom in order to foster identity development. This chapter begins by examining the prerequisite and necessary foundation of knowledge regarding graphic novels, identity, intercultural competence and of *American Born Chinese* itself. Afterwards, it discusses how the examples presented in the literary analysis can serve to foster and develop identity, using the analysis of the curriculum (LK20), previous research and theory as a framework for discussion. The discussion shows the strong connection between intercultural competence and the development of identity, as intercultural competence and its awareness are central elements in the development of identity through interaction. Additionally, the discussion highlights the importance of the classroom context and the teachers ability to facilitate interaction between the graphic novel and the pupils. At last, the examples presented in the literary analysis are shown to have great potential in fostering different aspects of identity, or the awareness and competence related to IC and its awareness to develop identity further.

5.1 Interculutral Comeptence and Identity Development in the EFL classroom

The development of identity is shown to be an important and central asset in the pupils' toolbox, and especially in preparing for future adult life. Identity crosses paths with several curricular aims, both in the core section and the interdisciplinary aims regarding mental health, as well as topics such as democracy and citizenship. Notably, the analysis of the core curriculum and similar curricular reports from the Norwegian educational government further emphasise that interactions are inevitable in the diverse context of Norwegian society and on an international and global level (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019c; NOU, 2015). Interactions are shown to be naturally intercultural, as we pull from our networks of identities and various levels in meeting with other people, both on a local and international level. Each individual brings with them a unique set of networks and resources, which enables the individual to interpret and relate with other people actions and words (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 81). Therefore, intercultural competence relates to the identity development because it encompasses the individuals ability to mobilise their networks of identity, and resources related to social groups in interaction as shown by curricular framework provided by The Council of Europe (2016). Such interactions are key to either fostering or developing intercultural competence, or intercultural awareness to prepare the individual for real-life encounters, from which Tomlinson (2019) describes that "real" intercultural competence is constructed.

The pupils will come in contact with, and communicate with other identities their entire lives, which shows the need for intercultural competence in the development of their respective identities. Byram (1997) also emphasises the need to see and meet other perspectives as key to develop intercultural competence (p. 3-4). Without intercultural competence and its awareness to construct it, development of identity becomes challenging and possibly futile or ineffective. This will affect the pupils ability to create meaning from new cultural encounters, and to use the moments of irritation as opportunities for learning (Reichl, 2013, p. 109), which they need in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world (Reichl, 2013, p. 107; Giampara, 2004, p. 16). Together, this shows the important mandate that the school and teacher has in providing grounds for the fostering and development of identity.

5.2 Necessary competence and context in using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool

This section aims to show some of the necessary context and knowledge required from both the teachers and pupils when using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to its fullest extent. Competence and context in this section refer to the abilities related to intercultural awareness and competence, and of graphic novels in both teachers and pupils, in addition to the classroom context. The previous research sections mention several different classrooms attempts presented by Schieble (2011) and Carter & Gomes (2010) and Dunn (2018), in which *American Born Chinese* was used in various lessons and projects to foster understanding and knowledge regarding identity, intercultural competence and graphic novels themselves. As previously noted, the class of Carter & Gomes (2010) had an easier time relating to Jin and his struggles because of their shared experiences regarding social exclusion, rejection and bullying, despite not struggling with a crisis of identity related to cultural ethnicity or outer appearance (p. 73-74). In contrast, the class of Schieble (2011) was more or less unable to relate with Jin and his crisis of identity, and understood his crisis as an individual matter instead of an institutional form of exclusion and rejection. As Schieble (2011) notes, this is rooted in the cultural background of the pupils and the context of which the book was taught (p. 295) and shows the varying background and context in which the book was taught between the classes.

The different outcomes between these classes can arguably serve as an example of two different learning situations, and also showcase the importance of two distinct aspects: The previous knowledge of the pupils, their perception and understanding of identity, as well as the context of which the book is taught in. The classroom studies indicate that there is a strong connection between the potential learning outcome of the didactic situation and the previous knowledge that the pupils or students carries with them into the classroom. This can be related back to the "fragmented perception", as argued by McCloud (1993). As the class of Carter & Gomes (2010) carried a "fragmented perception" more similar to that of Jin, they were also able to relate more to him as a character and his struggles. Consequently, they managed to use their own experiences and connect them directly with that of Jin to construct a bridge between themselves and *American Born Chinese*, thus expanding on their previous understanding of identity, identity struggle and intercultural issues. In contrast, the

fragmented perception in the class of Schieble (2011) is based on a system of privilege and lack of experiences related to rejection and exclusion, which made the pupils unable to relate back to Jins experiences (p. 295). Arguably, this means that any approach using *American Born Chinese* to foster identity, and its underlying components of intercultural competence and awareness, requires the ability to meet, interact and relate to these characters, in order to understand their motivations, development and struggles. These abilities are also emphasized in the curriculum (LK20) as essential in the development of identity, by constructing the necessary intercultural competence that enables an individual to have successful interactions both locally and globally. This is inevitable as the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and diverse (Reichl, 2013, p. 109; Giampara, 2004, p. 16), thus demonstrating the need for these abilities as the pupils enter adulthood.

The necessary abilities noted above can be connected to the intercultural awareness term as noted by Tomlinson (2019). The term focuses on constructing intercultural competence as described in the theoretical framework by Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) through the creation of intercultural awareness as a base, from which to construct intercultural competence. Therefore, the term emphasises the ability to not be judgemental about perceived or innate differences, keep an open-minded reflection during interactions, and a willingness to learn from these through tolerance of uncertainty when these interactions fail (Tomlinson, 2019, pp. 19–20). This shows the necessary foundation required for interaction with other identities and people with different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural awareness also builds on the notion by Reichl (2013) of the necessary components in interaction, which Reichl (2013) argues to be the ability of "self-distancing from one's own position, a respectful confrontation with other viewpoints and a positive appraisal of contradiction and irritation as opportunities for learning (Reichl, 2013, p. 109). Despite Reichl (2013) not naming these abilities or mindsets as intercultural awareness specifically, they build on the same necessary components to create successful interactions or learn from the unsuccessful ones. Subsequently, both notions suggest the necessity of intercultural awareness or its abilities as key components in enabling successful interactions with other identities.

Arguably, it is the intercultural awareness or key abilities related to intercultural awareness that the class of Schieble (2011) to some degree lacked, as they had not developed the context necessary to understand the identity crisis of Jin, or relate to his experiences. As a

result, they were unable to relate to or understand the racism and prejudice that Jin faced because of his innate qualities, background and looks, and the subsequent crisis and transformation he endured. In contrast, the prior experiences of the class mentioned by Carter & Gomes (2010) brought with them a better foundation for understanding Jin, or more specifically the ability to relate, keep an open mind, as well as a willingness to learn from one another. Consequently, this shows the importance of the necessary intercultural awareness, specifically as grounds from which to create the successful interaction between the pupil and *American Born Chinese* as a text to develop identity in the EFL classroom.

The analysis shows that both Jin and The Monkey King can be described as somewhat complex characters by their struggle, which requires the ability to relate with them in order to work with *American Born Chinese* didactically in the EFL classroom, and understand, explore, and analyse their struggles and motivations. Intercultural awareness creates the required "bridge" between the pupil and the book, as shown in the class Carter & Gomes (2010) who had a more in-depth understanding and experience of the graphic novel and its contents. Consequently, this means that a somewhat strong or existing foundation of intercultural awareness allows for a more successful interaction with *American Born* Chinese as a text. The pupils will be able to further develop their intercultural competence, and by extension create more grounds for the inevitable social interactions that will occur in their lifetime. As shown, fostering intercultural awareness creates the foundation required for developing intercultural competence, which the analysis of the curriculum and theoretical framework further suggests is a crucial part of identity development as a whole. Without the necessary base of understanding, the pupils will be unable to, or at best struggle to relate with characters such as Jin or The Monkey King, and their subsequent root causes for their respective identity crises, struggles and motivations. Furthermore, this also enables *American Born Chinese* to function as a tool to further develop existing intercultural awareness, and by extension assist in creating intercultural competence. As noted by Schachter & Rich (2011), the construction of identity never formally ends (p. 223-224). This implies that graphic novel such as *American Born Chinese*, where identity and intercultural competence are central themes, can further assist in developing existing intercultural awareness and competence.

The other relevant aspect in both learning scenarios is the context of which *American Born Chinese* was taught. The class of Carter & Gomes (2010) arguably had a much more safe learning environment, in which they were able to share their experiences, express their opinions and discuss each others viewpoints. Moreover, they were also given time to reflect on their questions before posting questions to each other in the blog they created, which gave them a layer of safety. In contrast, the class of Schieble (2011) was taught in a digital classroom setting in which the pupils were more reluctant to speak up and share their prior experiences, perspectives and general viewpoints. Consequently, they were less able to challenge each others perspectives, and by extension expand on their understanding of Jins identity struggle because of their limited context of interaction. They lacked the safe learning environment provided in the class of Carter & Gomes (2010) and Dunn (2018), which subsequently affected their ability to capture the essence of the novel and develop their identities. These classroom attempts thus show the necessity for a safe learning environment in which the pupils are comfortable sharing their opinions, viewpoints and prior experiences to connect with characters such as Jin or The Monkey King. Furthermore, the importance of a previously mentioned safe learning environment can be connected to the classroom study conducted by Dunn (2018), in which the pupils taught each other common terminology and key phrases related to graphic novels and possible reading strategies. The safe classroom aspect that existed in the class of Carter & Gomes (2010) and lacking in Schieble (2011) was arguably present in the class of Dunn (2018), which enabled the pupils to learn in groups, and use their various leveled knowledge of the graphic novel to their advantage in teaching each other. Consequently, this creates the necessary grounds for a closer reading of *American Born Chinese*, and shows the possibilities in variation, active participation and discussion. The presented possibilities can be connected to the study conducted by Irimia (2012). Irimia (2012) notes that the creation of intercultural competence focuses less on transition of culture itself, and more on the awareness and experiences of the learners and people from the target language culture, as well as those that are present in the learning context (Irimia, 2012, p. 331). The safe classroom aspect present in for example Dunn (2018) and Cater & Gomes (2010) allowed for the creation or development of intercultural competence by using the pupils own experiences present in the classroom to raise the awareness and experiences they shared.

The discussion so far suggest that the classroom or learning context of which *American Born Chinese* is taught influences the pupils' ability to read, discuss and share their viewpoints of for example Jins crisis of identity (Carter & Gomes, 2010; Dunn, 2018; Schieble, 2011). The context then includes its setting as either in the classroom or digital, in addition to the pupils previous intercultural awareness or level of intercultural competence. The presence of an educator or teacher within the classroom context ties to Schieble (2014), who as previously noted, specifically mentions the central role of the teacher in creating meaning. Familiarity with the key phrases of the graphic novel as noted by Rimmereide (2021), will enable a teacher to support discussion of its form, and thus help enable a more close reading of the multimedia format present in the book. Additionally, the teachers familiarity of multimodality as described by Rimmereide (Rimmereide, 2020, p. 194; Rimmereide, 2021, p. 200-201) and multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5) enables a teacher better facilitate an approach in which the pupils are exposed to messages containing several modes of communication at once. From this, the pupils are then given the necessary support to decode the various messages contained within the graphic novel. The curriculum emphasises the ability to decode multimodal messages as essential within reading as a skill (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019a), and thus shows how important the ability to "read between the lines" is, especially in multimedia formats and messages. Furthermore, multiliteracies emphasises this ability as well, as it better represents the technological development and communication that occurs on a daily basis. It is then arguable that the teachers ability and role in supporting the pupils decoding of messages enable the skills related to multiliteracy to be developed, in using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to develop identity.

Arguably, the central role of the teacher suggests that working with *American Born Chinese* to foster identity requires, in addition to intercultural awareness and a learning environment which enables interaction between pupils, also a teacher who is able to promote "students to engage in democratic dialogue about equity in response to visual messages that circulate historic and present-day racism and other derogatory messages about class, gender, sexual orientation and ability" (Schieble, 2014, p. 52). For example, the historic and present-day racism represented in Chin-Kee could be explored, as well as the derogatory messages that Jin, Suzy, and Wei-Chen are called (Yang, 2009, p. 96). From a teachers or educators perspective, this requires familiarity with the contents of the book, and an understanding of the historic significance and roots of for example the ethnic slurs, and the innate appearance

of Chin-Kee and his connection with the "oriental man" (Smith, 2014, p. 2) and "yellow peril" (BGSU University Libraries, 2023).

Moreover, a base knowledge or understanding of identity, the various levels as presented by Schachter & Rich (2011) and the networks related to identity implied in these levels (Council of Europe, 2016) can assist in the creation of a solid and strong foundation from which the teacher can foster identity development in the EFL classroom. This can be connected to, Irimia (2012) who also notes that the creation of intercultural competence focuses less on transition of culture itself, and more on the experiences of the learners and people from the target language culture, as well as those that are present in the learning context (Irimia, 2012, p. 331). The pupils then use each other and *American Born Chinese* to discuss and "latch" on other experiences and cultural expressions that are "lived", either from each other or from Jin, Wei-Chen and The Monkey King to support identity development.

As the class of Dunn (2018) shows, the teacher must also be able to support the discussion between the pupils. This requires knowledge of the graphic novel and key terminology as well, in order to assist in the many interactions between the pupils in which they share their opinions and perspectives. Building on this, Schachter & Rich (2011) mentions the several potential pitfalls in developing identity within the boundaries of the classroom (p. 226). This also shows that the values and previous knowledge of the teacher affects their ability to support pupil interaction, and by extension the pupils' final perception of for example the historic roots of Chin-Kee or Jins identity crisis. As Schachter & Rich (2011) argue, two different teachers might find themselves in disagreement of specifically what aspects of identity development to focus on in the classroom. Therefore, it is arguable that an approach utilizing *American Born Chinese* to develop identity, depends to some extent on the teachers knowledge and understanding of identity and intercultural competence. As shown, this will be reflected in the context of which the book is taught in, as well as the ability to facilitate discussion and interaction.

5.3 Using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to develop identity

The previous section shows the importance of factors related to the classroom context and the teachers ability to support the development of IC and identity in the EFL classroom. Additionally, it also shows how important the interaction is in the development of identity, either between the pupils using the graphic novel as a base of discussion, or between the pupils and the book itself. The aim of this section is to connect the findings of the literary analysis to the use of *American Born Chinese* in the EFL classroom, and show how the examples presented can be used to develop identity as a form of interaction. It begins by discussing the graphic novels multimodal form and intertextuality in light of multiliteracy and identity development, before moving on to the themes of transformation, racism and exclusion. The last part of this section discusses how Chin-Kee as a character can be understood in the EFL classroom, in light of his racist and caricature-like properties in order to develop an understanding of the damage of racism and prejudice.

As a text or graphic novel, *American Born Chinese* offers the possibility of fostering identity by preparing the pupils for real-life intercultural encounters as shown by Tomlinson (2019), or by further developing intercultural competence that is already existing as argued by Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020). Either way, it is clear that interaction with *American Born Chinese* as a text can be used to foster the necessary skills, mindsets and abilities that enable the development of identity. Intercultural competence, and by extension identity, is developed by challenging the pupils perceptions and knowledge related to identity and intercultural competence (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 81-82). The moments and examples presented in the literary analysis regarding Jin, The Monkey King and Chin-Kee contains such new cultural expressions, ways of thinking and communicative methods that creates new challenges and opportunities for reflection. These can challenge and add to the "fragmented perception" of the pupils (McCloud, 1993), thus leading to the development of identity by creating familiarity and understanding of other peoples' mindsets and expressions.

The literary analysis shows that *American Born Chinese* takes on inspiration from all across the world in its intertextuality. The complex and multilayered cultural bridge contained in

the book shows an interplay between the various elements that Yang has brought into the stories of Jin and The Monkey King. This can be explored in the classroom in light of the relatability and possible exposure to different aspects of intercultural competence. The books intertextuality allows it to reference and represent several cultural contexts and literary works at once, such as Chinese folklore and mythology, The Bible, *Journey to the West*, and *Faust* at the same time, in addition to its multimodal form and roots in traditions of oral storytelling. Its broad representation exposes the pupils to new cultural contexts, which then allows pupils from several backgrounds to relate to the books content, and find familiarity in the similarities between *American Born Chinese* and their own cultural context and knowledge of texts and communicative traditions. The book then connects these to the new cultural contexts, therefore establishing a connection between what they are already familiar with and the "unknown". This will assist in developing new perspectives which they can add to their "fragmented perception", thus creating more grounds for the fostering of intercultural competence, and therefore identity. Additionally, the curriculum in section 1.2 also emphasises the diversity, and an understanding of the pupils self in relation with others as essential components of intercultural comeptence and identity. The various contexts presented shows the interplay of various cultural elements into one overall narrative related to Jin, and thus how diverse our identities has become in the context of globalisation and the diversity of the world. This arguably means that the various cultural contexts present in the book can help explore the pupils identity in relation to the rest of the world, by playing on both the familiarity of certain elements and the "foreign" aspect of others.

Identity as shown in the theoretical framework has often been limited to and associated with one aspect of our identity, primarily centered around our ethnicity or geographical location. Identity as a term is shown to be outdated, and connected to an old understanding of cultural theory that does not recognize the flux and transitional properties of identity and culture. The intertextuality of *American Born Chinese* then fights this notion by showing how interconnected culture and identity are between individuals. Jins connection with a range of cultural contexts shows how he as a character is much more than just "Chinese" or the ethnic slurs he is referred to at times, and can be explored to fight the historical limitations related to identity and thus foster its development. This also represents a transcultural approach that recognizes the dynamic properties related to the individuals identity. Additionally, the intertextuality and interconnectedness of the book can then create a sense of belonging by

letting the pupils recognize elements from their own lives in the book. This is especially important as a sense of belonging is crucial in the development of pupil identity, as well as the interdisciplinary curriculum aims related to "health & life skills" and "democracy and citizenship" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019b). The sense of belonging enabled by the books intertextuality helps establish a connection between the pupils characters such as Jin, which in the long run helps foster the awareness necessary for intercultural competence and identity development.

The intertextuality and representation of several communicative modes at once can arguably add to the motivational aspect of reading as noted by Burwitz-Melzer (2013) and Carter (2008). The intertextuality of the book offers a varied alternative to conventional literature by including genres that the pupils might already be familiar with. The variation of formats and the subsequent increase in motivation an help "bridge" the book into the "getaway" function as noted by Carter (2008) and present opportunities for more varied reading. In turn, this can affect their reading motivation, and for example give reluctant and experienced readers alike the opportunity to explore the stories of Jin, The Monkey King and Chin-Kee by offering a fun, multimodal and lighthearted alternative to conventional literature. As Rimmereide (2021) notes, it is not the graphic novel itself, but the graphic novel as an alternative that may increase the motivation (p. 198-199). Consequently, *American Born Chinese* offers such a motivational alternative, and the possibility of increased reading of the stories concerning The Monkey King, Jin and Chin-Kee and Wei-Chen and their struggles of identity. The increased reading and subsequent reading motivation will be beneficial for any approach concerning the fostering of knowledge related to identity in the classroom, especially in situations where the development of intercultural awareness requires the use of texts that are genuine and authentic. Despite being a fantasy novel, the author has taken some inspiration from real-life encounters which gives an authentic aspect in addition to its relateability through its intertextuality that can be a point of discussion in the classroom. Consequently, this means that the book has an additional motivational factor in interaction with its characters, which therefore has the possibility to assist identity development.

Furthermore, by playing on the intertextuality, cultural connections, and its graphic form, *American Born Chinese* arguably adds to the motivational aspect of reading and working with English texts. The theoretical framework suggests that the use of multimodal text can

be beneficial. Notably, the mixing of words and images can increase and foster comprehension and memory skills (Carter, 2008), which is arguably a central aspect of the graphic novel through its multimodal form. An increased understanding of these semiotic aspects will assist in capturing the essence of *American Born Chinese*, and thus in the long run help foster knowledge of identity in the classroom. The multimodal format of the book also enables it to play on the media formats more than likely familiar with the pupils such as YouTube, comic books or Japanese manga as shown by Hathaway (2009), thus creating a sense of ownership as well. This also relates back to the curricular goal of reading as a basic skill, in which the curriculum emphasises the ability to read multimodal texts and finding meaning "between the lines" as an essential components of reading. Additionally, the fact that the pupils can also recognize elements from their own lives in its multimodality can in addition to motivation, also create a more meaningful and relateable experience between *American Born Chinese* and the reader. This will help in the reading of the book, and thus aid the development of identity by fostering a sense of relateability or "closeness" with characters such as Jin and his experiences. Moreover, the English subject curriculum specifically mentions the production of multimodal texts as necessary in the development of English. *American Born Chinese* can be used as a base from which the pupils use a multimedia format to for example show their similarities and differences with Jin to further explore their identity in relation to others. This demonstrates how far the intertextuality of the book reaches, as it allows for both relatability, and increased reading motivation and creates opportunities to fight historic and outdated connotations related to identity and the production of multimodal texts in the EFL classroom.

As a bildungsroman, *American Born Chinese* relates back to the overarching goal of development that is present in the Norwegian educational system and curriculum through its themes related to identity and multimodal form. The analysis shows how the book through its multimodal form and contents related to identity connects to various skills and abilities that are emphasized as important in the core curriculum, interdisciplinary goals and English subject curriculum. The books multimodality and otherwise use of graphic images and intertextuality enables a more varied reading experience, further channeled by its use of several semiotic aspects such as the visual and gestural. As McCloud (1993) shows, the pupil does not require lengthy training or exercise with reading or familiarity with literature to "get the message" (p. 49). Its multimodal form enables a close reading that does not

necessarily require much familiarity with its graphic form in the reader. These aid in the development of identity by creating a reading experience portraying the transformation, social exclusion and prejudice that both Jin and The Monkey King face in a way that is adaptable for classroom contexts with for example limited reading experience, or in which lack of motivation is a key factor for approaching reading. Additionally, the ability to read and create meaning from different types of texts, as well a understand the implicit meaning are emphasized as essential skills in the curriculum in the section of reading as a basic skill as well. The multimodal form of *American Born* Chinese allows for the emotions, thoughts and feelings of the characters to be portrayed in a way that the reader can find more relateable. This happens by for example playing on the cultural bridge or connection of certain graphic symbols as shown in the literary analysis, or the implicit meaning behind Wei-Chen removing his sunglasses and meeting Jin face to face. Moreover, each character has a development similar to that of "Bildung" which represents their growth and development of identity or "coming of age" as characters. The epiphanies that both Jin and The Monkey King experience as shown through the final transformation of Jin into Danny link back to the "growing up" aspect that is present in Bildung and identity development. The book, through its multimodal form and themes related to identity and intercultural competence, thus connects to several sections of the curriculum that are highly relevant to the development of identity and intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Its connection with the various learning objectives and goals of Norwegian education shows its overall reach and implication in the overall development of the pupil in both identity development, interdisciplinary topics and basic skills.

The use of multiple narratives shows how the book is able to use its intertextuality and bildung form to break historical connotations and myths related to "yellow peril" and "oriental man". Its multiple narratives enables it to move away from a Western-oriented tradition of literature, enabling opportunities to explore and understanding other forms of literary expressions regarding identity. The multiple narratives can help potential readers understand that for example the story of Chin-Kee is rooted in fantasy, as the other stories are also fantasy-like while at the same time rooted in a form of reality inspired by the books autobiographical aspect. Therefore, the use of these narratives breaks away from a typical Western-European notion of literature, and exposes the pupils to new ways in which the transformation, rejection and exclusion present in the book can be worked with in a didactic

situation. This suggests an increased complexity of the book, which allows for a deeper and more meaningful reflection of Jin and The Monkey King in the classroom, that at the same time also helps break the imperialistic aspect Vaquez (2002) argues to be often present in Bildung-style literature (p. 85-86).

The examples provided in the analysis show how the book aligns with multiliteracy as presented by The New London Group (2000) to show the development of identity that takes place in Jin and The Monkey King. Multiliteracy is shown in the theoretical framework to be based on the use of several semiotic aspects at once, and play on the diverse contexts of communication to better reflect on how pupils communicate, by moving away from the "singular notion" of print-based texts. For example, the book portrays the feelings of Wei-Chen after Jins epiphany of identity. The use of monochrome color sends a conscious message of insecurity and desire for friendship. At the same time, the book plays on several semiotic aspects at once, thus representing the interplay of the dynamic resources available to the pupils in interaction. Consequently, this shows the feelings and development of identity between Jin and Wei-Chen, and portrays issues related to identity in a way that conventional literature is not able to. The double standard in the interaction between Jin and Greg as shown in the analysis also shows the irony of the prejudice that Jin faces in the comment of his hairstyle. The fact that Greg focuses on their differenecs in identity in place of their similarities is enabled through its multimodal form, and provides an excellent opportunity to explore and reflect over the outdated historical connotation related to identity as a term. The same notion also extends to the laugh tracks surrounding Chin-Kee, who disables the racist properties and "flips" them to the epiphany and self-acceptance at the end of the novel. The use of both visual, gestural and audio through its sitcom-style format enables a complexity of identity development that both represent Jin, and aspects of the pupils life. These will arguably help in a deeper reading and reflection of the book, and thus aid in the development of identity through reflection of other identities, in this case that of Jin.

Additionally, the function of the laugh tracks as presented by Oh (2017) further shows how the book plays on several semiotic aspects at the same time, and uses its multimodality to present the overall ridiculousness of Chin-Kee as a character, and thus actively challenge the contemporary stereotypes related to the Chinese identity and the notion of a "monolithic

Asian culture". The laugh tracks presented in the frame links Chin-Kee to the sitcom genre typical of comedy, while also playing on historic and overly exaggerated properties related to racist propaganda such as "Yellow Peril" and the "oriental man". These multimodal examples can be interacted with to show how untrue and damaging stereotypes and racism can be. These better represent the dynamic resources available to the pupils as argued by Multiliteracy, by specifically focusing on identity representation in a much broader way than singular text or language alone could possibly do. A teacher could for example show thes similarities of Chin-Kee to the propaganda posters he is inspired by, and then have the pupils explore other sets of prejudice and racism to better familiarise themselves with how damaging and hurtful they can be. Pupils or students could also explore the more subtle and "positive" stereotypes and therefore how they foster certain expectations that are damaging in the long term. Such an approach would not have been possible if the graphic novel had been a conventional book that simply described Chin-Kee in words. Subsequently, the identity development that can take place by using *American Born Chinese* in a didactic situation can be further assisted through an approach inspired by multiliteracy, which takes its multimodal properties into account to enable a closer reading.

The literary analysis shows the interplay between the various levels of identity in the transformation that several characters endure. The pupils can explore this interplay to get a glimpse into the perspectives of Jin and The Monkey King. This means that the reader uses their lenses noted by Dypedahl & Bøhn to read and understand the text and images in the book, from which the perspectives of for example Jin are latched onto their own. This assists the pupils in understanding his motives as a character, which can help intercultural awareness necessary for the construction of intercultural competence for future interactions. Moreover, the transformation endured by Jin and The Monkey King also shows the "forces of marginalization", as emphasized by Schachter & Galliher (2018). By exploring and specifically identifying the causes of Jin's break in his ego identity, pupils might be able to better understand the motives behind his transformation, which is rooted in the exclusion he because of his personal and social identities. The constant stream of racism and negative reinforcement and subsequent break in the ego level of identity can arguably be linked to the curricular goals of identity as well. The connection between identity and mental well-being is implied in the section of Health & Life skills, as well as confidence of identity in section 1.2 of the core curriculum. Both sections emphasise the development of identity as an

essential component in understanding ones position in regard others. Pupils can explore how the transformation affects Jin's relationship with Wei-Chen, or his insecurities surrounding his love interest Amelia. Other relevant moments include his difficulties of fitting in and consequent general well-being as his identity is singled down to that of "Chinese" exclusively by his peers in the schoolyard. This can help in creating reflection of the possible issues faced by those with a minority social identity in contrast with a majority culture and help foster the intercultural awareness or competence necessary for interaction in the diverse context of society as established by the curriculum.

As a character, Chin-Kee provides plenty of opportunities to explore racism, prejudice, and stereotypes in the context of developing identity. The analysis shows his connection with various stereotypes related to propaganda from the "yellow peril" and "oriental man". Additionally, there is also a strong connection between Chin-Kee and the model minority myth, which combined represents Jin's internalized crisis of identity and disdain for his Chinese identity, because of the constant stream of racism he is faced with. By further extension, his internalized crisis of identity is also the leading cause behind his transformation and desire to become "Danny". Through interaction with Chin-Kee, pupils will be exposed to the various prejudice and stereotypes based on racist propaganda aimed at those of East or South-East Asian heritage, and the historical significance behind these. This exposure can be used as grounds for reflection on stereotypes, and how these links back to the transformation that Jin forces onto himself. This can be further connected to the curricular goals of section 2.1 which highlights the elements relevant to the self-image, opinions and attitudes that grow in interaction with others.

The discussion shows how the pupils' identities develop through interaction with others, in which self-image, opinions and attitudes toward others are important aspects. Chin-Kee as a character enables the exploration of stereotypes as an extension of our attitudes, and how these affect our interaction with other identities, in addition to both our and others' self-image and opinions. This can also be tied to the model minority myth to explore stereotypes further, and their damaging effect despite a "positive" outlook at first glance. The fact that he as a character is extremely exaggerated in addition to the use of laugh tracks enables the book to directly poke fun at him and fight the same stereotypes it presents. Stereotypes related to Chin-Kee also show potential in connection with stereotypes as a general topic, which can be further discussed to reinforce and develop abilities related to empathy, and the

ability to meet other perspectives in new cultural encounters. Such interactions and the skills necessary to learn from these are highly relevant in developing intercultural awareness the abilities related to self-distancing, to have respectful confrontations and a positive outlook on contradictions and moments of irritation from new cultural interactions (Tomlinson, 2019, p. 19-20; Reichl, 2013, p. 109).

The aim of this chapter was to further build on the literary analysis and discuss some of the relevant didactic implications of using *American Born Chinese* as a graphic novel to develop identity in the EFL classroom. The theoretical framework and analysis of the curriculum show that interaction enables us to expand our perspectives and create a solid foundation from which to interact with other identities. As emphasized in the European curriculum framework, all interactions are by definition intercultural as the pupils use and expand on their various levels and networks in new meetings with new identities (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 19). Arguably, *American Born Chinese* can foster such interaction both between the pupils by using the graphic novel as a base, as well as between the pupils and the graphic novel as a text itself. This interaction and subsequent construction of the "bridge" between characters such as Jin or The Monkey King and the pupils require some degree of intercultural awareness, or at the very least the abilities, mindsets and skills related to the term to understand the systematic exclusion and prejudice that the characters face. Furthermore, the discussion shows how important and essential identity is for the overall development of the pupil, and the curricular goal of Bildung as presented in the Norwegian educational framework. The development and fostering of identity primarily happen through interaction with other identities, which allows for the expansion of our perception regarding others, and ourselves in relation to other identities. This then builds on our fragmented perception of the world, and helps us understand other identities, ways of communication and motives. The abilities present in intercultural awareness and competence enable us to have more successful interactions and learn from the unsuccessful ones through the "moments of irritation" (Reichl, 2013, p. 109).

The discussion suggests that a teacher can use *American Born Chinese* as grounds to foster intercultural awareness to prepare them for real-life encounters or use the graphic novel to further develop existing intercultural competence. Both aspects will nevertheless assist in the development of identity and can be somewhat adapted to the needs of the class or pupil group. A class that lacks intercultural awareness could for example reflect on the various

levels of identity and their social networks, as well as fpersonal experiences with racism and prejudice before working with *American Born Chinese*. This could for example be beneficial in a class similar to the one presented in Schieble (2011), which lacked some of the necessary intercultural awareness to relate with Jin's crisis of identity. On the other hand, a class that has a higher level of intercultural awareness and competence could focus on improving the foundation necessary for interaction in the diverse context of society established by the curriculum (LK20). This is then dependent on the teachers ability to create a safe learning environment, in addition to the limitations of the learning context and the teachers own understanding of identity and intercultural competence.

Moreover, the teachers knowledge related to the graphic form of *American Born Chinese* in combination with the ability to support discussion and interaction between pupils help enable a closer reading of the book. The teacher or otherwise central educator in the classroom should support or create lessons that help the pupils become familiar with key terminology of graphic novels, thus enabling them to understand and create meaning from the many symbols and graphic images present in the graphic novel related to intercultural competence and identity development. As shown, this requires familiarity of graphic novels, as well as of the book itself and some understanding of identity and intercultural competence. Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) emphasises that intercultural competence and intercultural issues should be taught as an integrated element into other learning aims and aspects in the English classroom (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 84; Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 19). This requires a teacher who is also familiar with intercultural competence, is able to assess such learning both summatively and formatively, as well as curricular goals. The process of developing identity is shown to be a never-ending process (Byram et al., 2002, p. 11; Reichl, 2013, p. 109; Schachter & Rich, 2011, p. 223-224) and thus continues throughout the entire life of the pupil. The teachers background and ability to create interaction therefore play an essential role in supporting the development of identity, as a part of the pupils educational journey and in becoming adults.

The intertextuality and various cultural contexts that serve as inspiration for *American Born Chinese* represent the dynamic and transitional properties of identity, which enables exploration of other identities by playing on familiarity and relatability. Notably, the mixing of both typical "Eastern" and "Western" narratives helps connect the unknown to the pupils

perception and show how interconnected and in "flux" our identities are, as emphasized by Giampara (2004) and Reichl (2013). The intertextuality and multimodal form also enable an approach inspired by multiliteracy, as the book is able to play on the semiotic aspects and the dynamic representation of the pupils' abilities related to reading and gathering information from texts. Furthermore, the discussion also shows how the various characters present in the book allows for exploration of different aspects of identity, and how they relate back to the curricular goals related to identity development and the fostering of intercultural competence. This is in part enabled by the books multimodal form, which shows how the themes of transformation, rejection and social exclusion affect the characters. Jin, his Anglo-American variant "Danny" and The Monkey King can be explored in light of their identity crises, and how the racism and prejudice they suffer both shape and motivate their transformation. Chin-Kee on the other hand, can be explored to see the historic representation of the Chinese identity, and his innate appearance related to stereotypes. These link back to the curricular goals related to identity and self-understanding, opinions and attitudes that are highly relevant in interaction with other identities.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis is to examine the potential of using *American Born Chinese* to foster identity development and intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. The thesis highlights the importance of identity as a key component of the pupils' toolbox as they enter adult life. The development of identity is essential in creating the necessary foundation for interactions with other identities, which is shown to be inevitable in an increasingly diversified, interconnected, and globalized world. Throughout their entire lives, the pupils will be exposed to new cultural expressions, ways of living and communicative forms both on an international and local level. These encounters will shape their self-image, as well as attitudes and opinions that they will carry with them throughout their lives. This shows the importance of identity development, and by extension the relevancy of this thesis.

The analysis of the curriculum and discussion shows the schools mandate and responsibility in creating room for reflection, exploration, and the development of our identities. Identity itself is developed both inside and outside of the classroom and is shown to be a lifelong process that formally never ends. This suggests that the development that happens in school lays an important foundation for the pupils development into adulthood, in addition to their abilities related to future and present interactions with other identities. This further links to the strong connection between intercultural competence and the development of identity, as it encompasses the individuals ability to mobilize their networks of identity and use the available resources in new encounters and interactions. The EFL classroom then functions as possible grounds from which to prepare them for the social and intercultural interactions that will inevitably happen outside of the EFL classroom. The thesis therefore demonstrates the possibility of using *American Born Chinese* as a didactic tool to prepare the pupils for real-life cultural encounters, specifically by fostering intercultural awareness and exposing the pupils to new identities, motives, and struggles.

As this thesis shows, *American Born Chinese* can help fulfil the mandate presented. Its potential as a didactic tool to foster and develop identity and intercultural competence comes from the fact that it presents a wide range of opportunities to explore issues related to identity and intercultural competence. Its multimodal form, intertextuality and portrayal of its characters enable exploration of different aspects related to identity, and thus also as a didactic alternative to conventional literature in the EFL classroom. The discussion also

presents some of the necessary preparations needed to utilize the novel to its fullest didactic extent. These factors include the level of intercultural awareness, a teacher that can facilitate and support interaction, and a classroom context which allows the pupil to discuss and interact with each other, using the book as a base for discussion in a safe learning environment.

The book demonstrates how interconnected and dynamic our identities have become by playing on a wide range of cultural contexts in its inspiration and subsequent intertextuality, in addition to the presence of several recognizable multimedia formats. Its multimodal form enables a more complex and deeper reading of its themes related to identity, such as the transformation that several characters throughout the book endure in response to their respective identity crises. The story of Jin, his Anglo-American variant "Danny", and The Monkey King can be explored in light of their struggles of identity, social exclusion, and prejudice that they have to battle. Each of these characters holds the potential to explore alternate identities through interaction, which enables the expansion and incorporation of their perspectives onto the pupils'. Chin-Kee can be explored in light of his connection with the "yellow peril", "oriental man", and caricature-like properties, heavily inspired by the racism and propaganda against Chinese or other East-Asian/Asian immigrants. Interaction with Chin-Kee allows for reflection regarding attitudes, opinions, and self-image, which is shown in the analysis to be an important aspect of identity development. The most central potential of the graphic novel is how it presents opportunities for the exploration of alternative perspectives, their motives and struggles of identity through a multimodal format. The book challenges the readers understanding of identity and the self through its themes of systematic social exclusion, rejection, and transformation, which aids the development of identity and its many underlying components and levels.

Future research

This thesis has examined the potential of using *American Born Chinese* to develop identity from a purely theoretical perspective. The previous research presented shows some practical application of the book within various classroom contexts, as shown by Carter & Gomes (2010), Schieble (2011) and Dunn (2018). Nevertheless, research into the practical application of *ABC* to specifically develop identity would further build on the findings of this thesis and would demonstrate the potential presented in this thesis in an actual classroom setting. This can also reveal other didactic implications that this thesis was not able to cover.

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