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**Austen in the L2 Classroom:
Implementing *Pride and Prejudice* to
Develop Critical Literacy Skills
Upheld by Four LK20 Core Values**

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“and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind
by extensive reading.”

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the potential of using the pre-twentieth century novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen as a didactic tool to support the development of critical literacy skills. Pupils will encounter text and cultures that need interpretation throughout their life experiences. In order to critically assess these interactions, pupils must have the foundational knowledge and skillset for comprehension. L2 pupils are better prepared to study language and perspective-shifting text manipulation through critical literacy learning. Teaching English as an L2 requires teaching the cultural aspects of that language and this approach is integral to the development of pupils' intercultural communicative competence. Examining the literary heritage of the English-speaking world, through *Pride and Prejudice*, can enhance pupil's understanding of the language by giving them a more comprehensive context that goes beyond current language usage and encompasses the historical specifics that have shaped its development.

By analysing four core curriculum values—human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, and democracy and participation—the study demonstrates the value and relevance of close reading *Pride and Prejudice* in the Vg1 classroom. The thesis further suggests working with the novel in class through an analysis of four central themes, close reading a specific passage, using role-play or doing a comparative analysis of the novel and an adaptation.

Sammendrag

I denne avhandlingen undersøker jeg hvorvidt romanen *Stolthet og fordom* (1813) av Jane Austen kan fungere som en støtte i utviklingen av elevers kritiske leseferdigheter. Elever vil møte tekst og kulturer som krever tolkning gjennom sine livserfaringer. For å kunne gjøre en kritisk vurdering av disse, må elevene ha grunnleggende kunnskap og ferdigheter for å forstå disse i sammenheng. Andrespråkelever blir bedre forberedt på å studere språk og komplekse tekster som formidler ulike perspektiver gjennom kritisk leseopplæring. Undervisning i engelsk som et andrespråk krever undervisning i de kulturelle aspektene av språket, og denne tilnærmingen er viktig i utviklingen av elevenes interkulturelle kommunikative kompetanse. Å arbeide med *Stolthet og Fordom* kan både fungere som en inngang til den litterære arven i den engelskspråklige verden, samtidig kan den forbedre elevenes forståelse av språket ved at romanen åpner for diskusjon rundt tekst i kontekst, som gir elevene en forståelse som omfatter de historiske elementene som har formet språkets utvikling.

Ved å analysere fire kjerneelementer i læreplanen—menneskeverdet, identitet og kulturelt mangfold, kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet, og demokrati og medvirkning—demonstrerer oppgaven verdien og relevansen av å nærlese *Stolthet og Fordom* på Vg1. Avhandlingen anbefaler å jobbe med romanen i klassen gjennom en analyse av fire sentrale temaer, nærlesing av et spesifikt utdrag, bruk av rollespill eller å gjennomføre en sammenlignende analyse av romanen og en adaptasjon.

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1. Introduction

Reading has a profound impact on how pupils perceive the world and themselves. Reading must be prioritised by teachers as the cornerstone of learning. Mastering reading opens doors to knowledge, empathy, and critical thinking. Hayles (2010) expresses concern about the potential loss of critical reading skills, particularly close reading. Since reading is more than just a skill, it is crucial to include as much of it as possible in the classroom. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* stands as a literary work that has been closely read, analysed, and taught for over two centuries. As an English as an Additional Language (L2) teacher, including this novel in the classroom is particularly relevant. *Pride and Prejudice* can offer an exploration of culture, language, and society, which establishes a basis for language learning. Through critical literacy, this thesis investigates *Pride and Prejudice*'s applicability in second language learning settings in upper secondary school and considers how to use the text to effectively engage pupils in literary analysis. The introduction of LK20 has extended the definition of teaching literature and given teachers a variety of pedagogical options. Teaching strategies can be more flexible as a result of this freedom, however, there is a chance that the importance of pre-twentieth century literature can be overlooked, because the focus is on texts that are deemed 'relevant' to the pupils, such as THUG which is already in many textbooks.

Lyngstad (2019) researched English teachers' perspective and beliefs about literature in the Norwegian upper secondary classroom. One survey found one particular aspect of the teachers' responses that seems to be common to all of them; they consider the interests and/or language proficiency of their pupils. Teacher 1 maintained that lengthy and difficult texts were inappropriate because they would quickly bore pupils and be difficult to work with. Similar sentiments were expressed by teacher 2, who stated that reading difficult-to-understand old texts prevented "pupils from reading literature that gives them something." Old favourites in the original version would not function well in the classroom, according to teacher 3, because there was a language barrier when pupils read these kinds of texts, and this led to pupils not learning much from them. (Lyngstad, 2019, pp. 160-161). Ødegård (2021) explores young adult literature in the English classroom and her results demonstrate that, prior to the introduction of YA literature as a competence aim, in LK20 (secondary school), all participants had used YAL in their teaching careers already and had found it to be most advantageous. (p. 72).

This thesis urges for a re-think of existing approaches, mostly consisting of YAL, contemporary literature, and viewing older works as not functional in the classroom. Giving pupils exposure to a wide range of literary works from different periods and genres is essential. Even though this literature certainly has a legitimate place in the classroom, we should not undervalue the information and educational opportunities presented by older works of literature. The inclusion of pre-twentieth-century literature in the syllabus provides opportunities for valuable educational experiences, despite its challenging language. *Pride and Prejudice* provides an understanding of human experiences in historical contexts, but also demonstrates that language use and literary approaches are context specific. In this case by reflecting the cultural norms and mores of Regency England.

Promoting close reading of this kind of literature helps pupils become more analytical thinkers and develop a greater understanding of the intricacies of language and storytelling. Pupils gain more insight into various viewpoints regarding the evolution of tradition and cultural values over time by studying traditional literary works. Examining the four LK20 core values—human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, democracy and participation—highlights the significance of using the novel in L2 classrooms. A detailed analysis of four themes in the novel, how it aligns to the fundamental values of the curriculum, and its relationship to critical literacy will demonstrate *Pride and Prejudice*'s applicability to the English subject class, particularly Vg1, which is the last year of obligatory English education required in Norwegian schools. The thesis particularly argues for close reading a specific passage, Mr. Collin's proposal to Elizabeth Bennet, as a learning activity in the classroom.

1.1 Thesis Aim and Research Questions

The emergence of digital media, social media, and new literary forms has changed the way we read and gather information over the past few decades. These shifts have affected our reading preferences, attention spans, and the way we introduce and make use of literature with pupils in the classroom. Amidst this shift, there has been a relative lack of exploration into the lasting benefits of traditional reading through older literature, and the values they embody. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the possible advantages of using *Pride and Prejudice* as a teaching resource, with an emphasis on how the book can support the growth of critical literacy. Critical literacy has been “the subject of a half-century of theoretical debate and practical innovation in the field of education,” Luke (2014, p. 21). Critical literacy

also focuses on comprehending and challenging the sociopolitical structures that impact our day-to-day existence.

The following are the research questions that is the foundation of this study:

- 1) How does working with *Pride and Prejudice* contribute to the development of critical literacy skills?
- 2) In what manner does working with *Pride and Prejudice* align with the LK20 core curriculum values?
- 3) How can teachers effectively integrate *Pride and Prejudice* into the L2 classroom?

2. Critical Literacy – Theory and Practice

Critical literacy pedagogy is an approach that is becoming increasingly popular for analysing media in educational settings. This method enhances the teaching and learning of language and culture in L2 conditions by allowing both teachers and pupils to explore diverse media formats. Critical literacy emerged from Paulo Freire's social justice pedagogy in the late 1960s and has been gaining popularity as a preferred approach to teaching English since the early 2000s. "The object of a half-century of theoretical debate and practical innovation in the field of education" is how Luke (2014) defines and characterises critical literacy (p. 21). Critical literacy additionally concentrates on comprehending and challenging the sociopolitical structures that impact our day-to-day existence. It places a strong emphasis on using language to analyse social issues such as race, class, gender, and disability and investigate how discourse affects power relations and societal roles. This critical literacy approach looks closely at how language shapes and affects how we perceive social identities and power dynamics in society. (Vasquez, 2017, pp. 7-8).

According to Vasquez (2017), critical literacy should be included into all aspects of education, acting as part of an overall teaching strategy rather than just a single subject matter. It promotes the idea that, like a text, the world is a construct that is subject to critical analysis. Early critical literacy instruction prepares pupils to study language and its effects, including language control and perspective-changing text manipulation. It is widely acknowledged that texts are fundamentally biased and are designed to place readers in particular positions. As such, it is crucial to challenge and comprehend these underlying prejudices and points of view. (p. 7). Teaching English as an L2 requires teaching the cultural aspects of that language and this approach is integral to intercultural communicative competence. Older texts have a discourse of their time, which the contemporary reader is invited to explore.

Critical literacy, not confined to a singular definition, includes fundamental ideas that centre on the analysis of language. It involves an analysis beyond the surface level of texts to uncover hidden meanings and agendas, encouraging readers to adopt a critical stance towards the narratives they encounter (Alford, 2019, p. 7). The method places a strong emphasis on the value of challenging the underlying assumptions and objectives behind texts. Alford (2019) states that critical literacy is concerned with comprehending text mechanisms, readers' responses to them, and methods for understanding the intended impacts (p. 7). This skill is particularly crucial for English L2 learners, who often engage with materials rooted in cultural and environmental contexts distinct from their own experiences. For these learners to gain

further comprehension of texts, an understanding of the socio-cultural foundations and specifics of meaning that go beyond the literal interpretation of words is required. Furthermore, literacy within the classroom has a broad meaning, making choosing the texts difficult. Teaching literature and linguistic elements are vital, yet, as experts in second language acquisition suggest, language learning is inseparable from cultural understanding. (Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 118). Therefore, critical literacy plays a crucial role in enabling L2 learners to explore cultural and historical contexts through a variety of media, in addition to written language. The Norwegian Department of Education's Framework for Basic Skills (2013) reflects an expanded understanding of literacy in the twenty-first century, recognising various media including digital platforms as integral to reading. This framework defines reading as an activity that transcends traditional textual comprehension, encompassing the interpretation of diverse forms such as images and symbols. Furthermore, LK20 also reflects this expanded understanding, as the definition of texts is now wider, and fits several other elements than the written word.

The concept of critical literacy extends to analysing new media. People do have a focus on evaluating online information for reliability but are lacking in-depth critical analysis. Understanding the impact of ideologies on media content, identifying stereotypes, and telling fact from fiction are all examples of media literacy skills. (Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 119). This method is essential for encouraging critical thinking in pupils and dissecting the ideological foundations of all media. When examining news coverage using a critical literacy lens, for example, biases and cultural ideologies can be exposed. This is demonstrated by how differently a news story is portrayed in different media outlets. This assists pupils in identifying the subtle, frequently concealed cultural and ideological messages present in media portrayals. (Habegger-Conti, 2015, pp. 119-120). This way of teaching critical thinking can also be employed when reading more traditional literature. L2 learners need to be able to dissect the information of the text and pinpoint any biases and understand the cultural underpinnings of the story.

Critical literacy proves effective when applied to conventional 'texts,' making it an ideal approach for engaging with pre-twentieth-century literature such as *Pride and Prejudice*. This is because it is an inherent approach to understanding literature in its cultural and historical context. By approaching the themes of the novel with a critical lens, pupils can gain a better understanding of contemporary social structures and their historical roots, recognising Austen's work as not only historically significant but also relevant to current societal

discussions. Additionally, it is more beneficial to accept and integrate both forms rather than viewing the transition from traditional novels to new media as a negative development for learning English as an L2. Using critical literacy as a teaching tool in the classroom can encourage pupils to engage more closely with text and multimedia content. The difficulty for teachers is to successfully integrate new and old media into the syllabus, especially for upper secondary pupils, while making sure that reading—in all of its forms—remains a cornerstone of language learning.

2.1 Critical Literacy Pedagogy

Critical literacy in education has been shaped by a number of theoretical frameworks and academic traditions, which have an impact on how it is conceptualised and applied in practice. (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 302). Theoretical perspectives have contributed to the understanding of critical literacy and shaping it as a conceptual framework for classroom practice, and an ethos guiding literacy work in educational settings. Their purpose is to provide insights into the relationship between texts, meaning making, and power dynamics, which in turn helps to advance social justice and equity by promoting transformative actions that improve society (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 302). Critical literacy extends beyond a teaching setting, and becomes a way of living, learning, and teaching across all areas of the curriculum. (Vasquez, 2005, 2014a, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 302). Comber (2019) also emphasises the importance of teachers' dispositions, including their practices and resources. According to this perspective, critical literacy is a dynamic collection of strategies that analyse and examine texts while considering both the small-scale characteristics and the large-scale institutional framework. It is also important for pupils to understand the perspectives that texts are designed and produced from. (Janks, 2010; Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 302). Put differently, pupils acquire the skill of critical analysis by actively participating in the production and interpretation of texts.

Understanding the perspectives from which texts are designed and produced is applicable to *Pride and Prejudice*. For example, consideration of the socio-historical context in which Austen wrote the novel is vital for understanding the novel's themes. Austen's way of portraying Regency England reflects the perspectives and values of the time. The pupils can examine critically how the motivations and interactions of the characters are influenced by these societal norms throughout the narrative. Furthermore, analysing Austen's decisions and narrative devices highlights the construction of the text itself and this analysis has to be guided by a teacher.

The Four Resources Model is a well-known model that offers particular approaches to critical literacy. It centres on four literacy practices that readers should develop. (Varquez et al., 2019, p. 305). 1) Acquiring knowledge of the basic elements of text, such as the alphabet, in order to decode it. 2) Actively engaging with the text by interpreting and creating meaning by using past knowledge. 3) Being aware of various text genres and forms. 4) Learning to evaluate texts critically, seeing them through a critical lens, and realising that they are never neutral. Overall, these guidelines give pupils a thorough framework for critically interacting with texts, enabling them to navigate diverse literacy contexts with confidence. (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Varquez et al., 2019, p. 305).

A number of fundamental components are included in critical literacy that are necessary for effective teaching. Firstly, rather than being treated as a stand-alone subject, it needs to be integrated throughout the curriculum. Pupils should be encouraged to critically analyse texts while considering their own identities and viewpoints. Pupils should also be taught to recognise how texts are socially constructed and how this affects representation and power. (Varquez et al., 2019, pp. 306). By addressing social issues such as race, class, gender, and disability, this encourages pupils to challenge unfair systems and discourses. In addition, critical literacy has the capacity to positively impact pupils by giving them the tools they need to participate in democratic citizenship, make informed decisions, and support social justice efforts. Ultimately, critical literacy entails formulating and executing strategies to reinterpret texts, images, and practices in order to communicate messages that are more equitable and encourage social change. (Varquez et al., 2019, pp. 307). With the help of these essential components, teachers can build critical literacy skills in their pupils and enable them to interact critically with texts and their social contexts.

3. The Value of Pre-Twentieth Century Literature in Education

The objective of this chapter is to outline the benefit of working with pre-twentieth century literature, also referred to in this thesis as older literature. It is important to understand that not every work of older literature has a common theme. Instead, I highlight how studying such literature facilitates cross-cultural awareness and insight into the values and social codes of past societies. This approach helps pupils understand how particular social situations, language, and literature contribute to cultural contexts and influence societies and the principles they uphold. Studying historical texts can also provide insights into the customs and practices of contemporary British society, some of which may seem odd in present-day contexts. This chapter will also discuss the benefits of teaching pre-twentieth century literature and it will also give an overview of the development of reading.

3.1 Pre-Twentieth Century Literature

The focus of this thesis is early nineteenth-century literature, which is applied as a study to illustrate broader concepts that can be used when teaching pupils. This intentional limitation allows for a focused exploration of the literary landscape of a small section in history, examining in more detail the themes, developments, and cultural details that make this period distinctive. All of the writings that were produced and released between 1800 and 1900 are included in the body of British literature from the nineteenth century. During this time, there were several common themes in the literature, such as love, relationships, social life, gender, and religion. (Mukherjee, 2019, p. 69). Similar literary devices, such as satire, were used in the literature, which influenced the development of other genres including children's literature, short stories, and gothic literature. Additionally, several authors from this period went on to investigate societal issues and provide readers with more knowledge. Many focused on political issues, while others researched science and new inventions that were emerging. (Mukherjee, 2019, p. 70-71).

During this time, romantic emphasis on nature, individualism, and the sublime replaced the Enlightenment ideals of reason, influenced by the revolutionary developments in France and America. Novels that both praised and criticised elements of industrialisation, imperialism, and societal transformations were influenced by the industrial and technological advancements of the Victorian period. With a critical eye towards class and gender issues, Naturalism and Realism emerged. The literature of this period reinterpreted literary and cultural conventions, reflecting the difficulties and innovations of that time, especially in relation to industrialisation and the natural world. (DeAngelis, 2022, p. 2).

Through the course of the nineteenth century, the novel became a versatile genre. For forty years after the French Revolution in 1789, novelists established new themes and techniques to the novel. By doing this, they elevated it from an inferior level of critical esteem – “just a novel,” as one of Austen’s characters puts it – to the most essential, popular, and highly esteemed literary form. (Carter & Mcrae, 1998/2017, pp. 227-228). The novel started to cover a wide range of topics, themes, and settings, all of which reflected the intellectual atmosphere of the time. As a greater number of novel subjects were used as the basis for fiction, high-class society contrasts with the primitive; national concerns with regional ones; male and female points of view; and the present with the past. (Carter & Mcrae, 1998/2017, p. 228).

For a considerable amount of her career, Austen did not intentionally write for publication, which sets her apart from other novelists. Female writers were not unheard of, Clara Reeve, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Frances Burney, three of the most renowned authors of the thirty or so years prior to Austen, were women. (Carter & Mcrae, 1998/2017, p. 230). Austen purposefully stayed away from excess, effect, and exaggeration. Contrary to popular fiction of the time, she examined human nature and motivation through a microscope, not for didactic, moral, or satirical purposes, but rather with a subtle irony and insight that distinguish her novels as both documentation of a specific aspect of her time’s provincial society and representations of universal behavioural patterns. (Carter & Mcrae, 1998/2017, p. 231).

Pride and Prejudice captures the complexities of nineteenth-century society, occurring at this time of change and fresh concepts. The complexity of the time is reflected in Austen’s exploration of class, gender roles, and societal expectations in the book. Furthermore, the narrative techniques reflect and undermine the modes of politeness in language of the period. The examination of interpersonal relationships within a complicated social hierarchy and its focus on individualism in opposition to norms of society are in line with the century’s broader cultural shifts. It is also essential to approach this study with a critical perspective that acknowledges the temporality of these concepts. For instance, the portrayal of sensibility in literature, often regarded as a product of its time, underlines the importance of examining these texts through the lens of their specific historical and cultural backgrounds.

This approach ensures a scholarly examination that recognises the distinctiveness of past sentiments and practices without imposing contemporary interpretations of universality or timeless relevance. Because of this, *Pride and Prejudice* is a model text for understanding the landed gentry social dynamics of the time, which makes it an ideal choice for studying the

time's literature and its cultural impacts, and it is also a case study to argue for inclusion of a broader range of texts on the Norwegian L2 school curriculum, moving away from the belief that only contemporary works are useful or relevant.

3.1.1 Cultural Preservation

Academics emphasise how important it is to teach history in a way that fully engages pupils in their educational learning process. Including outstanding literature—especially historical fiction—in the curriculum is a successful way to encourage this kind of involvement. This thesis is not looking at historical fiction, but fiction produced in the past. (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2008, p. 198). Historical fiction, defined as realistic fiction set in the historical past (Hancock, 2004, as cited in Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2008, p. 198), plays an important function in the stories' narrative structures, where the historical setting is essential to the storyline. Historical fiction needs to tell a story that is compelling on its own and contain accurate historical details in order to have an impact. (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2008, p. 199).

This approach combines factual history with captivating narratives that present a range of perspectives, contextualised settings, and emotional resonance. (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2008, p. 199). While *Pride and Prejudice* does not fall into the category of historical fiction by definition, as Austen wrote about her own contemporary society, it is nevertheless a useful teaching tool that can be used in a way that is similar to that of teaching historical fiction. Through the lives of her fictional characters, the landed gentry, and social customs of the early nineteenth century give a look into the historical realities of the time. In this way, *Pride and Prejudice* allows teachers to use the novel to help pupils understand the social dynamics and historical facts of Regency England while also giving them insights into the historical context of the period. Therefore, while not historical fiction in the strictest sense, Austen is a well fitted resource for studying history through literature because her work enables an educational experience similar to the kind of engagement and learning historical fiction seeks to inspire, and also explores the relationship of language with temporal context. Perhaps even more than historical fiction, which often uses modern language for the narrative voice.

Furthermore, Paran (2008) investigated literature and its use in second language learning and found that the benefits of incorporating literature into language instruction are becoming increasingly evident. (p. 23). Consequently, teaching English to L2 pupils through older literature provides an opportunity to connect linguistic and cultural material. Pupils who may

not have grown up in the English language culture can acquire a deeper understanding of its historical specifics and developments by reading texts covering multiple centuries. These works of literature serve as both cultural preservation resources and a means of allowing pupils to investigate the stories, values, and beliefs that shaped earlier societies. The understanding that pupils have of the literary legacy of the English-speaking world can be enhanced by this investigation into the language, giving them a more comprehensive context that goes beyond contemporary usage and encompasses the historical elements that contributed to its development.

It is important to consider that texts which stand the test of time may actually reveal more about our own time than the period in which they were written. Reflecting on the long eighteenth century when Austen was writing, for instance, the most widely read works were predominantly sermons and poems, as evidenced by library records of the time. The most borrowed books were sermons. (Halsey, 2023). However, it is novels from this period that is still read today. This shift in focus suggests that our contemporary values and perspectives play a significant role in determining the literature from the past that continues to resonate with us. This acknowledgement can be built into the approach of using older literature in the classroom. This does not imply, for instance, that the novels from that period cannot be understood as a reflection of the attitudes of the time; rather, it only means that they were not the only cultural expressions of the time.

This type of literature is to continue, as far as is possible, an understanding of how language and culture were interwoven in that time, and how that informs language use today. By acting as historical links, these writings introduce readers to the past. According to Sales (1996/2016), literature is a form of cultural preservation. This is true of *Pride and Prejudice* as well by specifically concentrating on how Austen and her characters portray Regency England. According to Sales (1996/2016), Austen's novel functions as detailed social critique that capture the way of life during that time and goes on to state that Austen's writings are valuable tools for comprehending the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of early nineteenth-century England, because of her skill at fusing compelling storytelling with critical social analysis (pp. 26-28).

Moreover, the conservation of cultural diversity in older literature goes beyond historical disclosure; it also gives pupils a chance to participate in intercultural inquiry and develop a broader worldview. (Godwin Olaoye & Daniel, 2024, pp. 3-4). The cultural preservation

function of novels from the nineteenth century therefore encourages intercultural knowledge, empathy, and understanding of societies that have influenced the course of progress, as well as understanding that pupils' own values are not universal.

3.1.2 Language and Literary Appreciation

Older literature continues to promote language and appreciation of literature by giving readers and pupils an opportunity to become familiar with varied forms of language and storytelling from different cultural contexts. Literary appreciation, according to Anigbogu (2016), is “reading, understanding, and making a critical judgement of a literary work’s theme, style, use of figurative and non-figurative language, as well as other elements.” In one way or another, we are all critics. We are still passing judgement even when we claim that evaluating a literary work is impossible. Consequently, literary appreciation is any effort to evaluate and discuss literary works to express opinions about them. (p. 3). This implies that literature in any form, from any period, is examined and analysed. Pupils gain an increased understanding of the subtleties of language and its ability to express ideas, feelings, and intricate stories as they examine the skilfully written language of a piece of literature. Understanding the methods used to convey meaning in literary works is enhanced by analysing the rhetorical, symbolic, and literary devices employed in older literature.

Examining pre-twentieth century literature, however, exposes us to linguistic genres and styles that are uncommon in contemporary literature. For this reason, it is important to read and become acquainted with older literature in particular. Exposure to a variety of literary genres and linguistic styles found in older literature not only expands our comprehension of the language but also gives us the tools necessary to recognise and value a wide range of communication patterns and styles. This latter skill is essential for acquiring intercultural communicative competence in English, which is the capacity to comprehend and apply knowledge of one’s own and other cultures to interpersonal communication. (Byram, 1997/2020, p. 27).

Words such as “entail” or “society” in *Pride and Prejudice* could be confusing to pupils. The entailment of Mr. Bennet’s estate in the novel, which prevents his daughters from inheriting, reflects particular legal practices prevalent of that time. Without context, readers of today may misinterpret the word “entail,” believing it to mean only “to involve” or “require,” and fail to recognise its historical significance in relation to inheritance and property law, which has a significant impact on the plot and the futures of the characters. Furthermore, the term

“society” appears in various forms throughout the novel. “Society” and its variations typically imply sociological constructs such as institutions, laws, or traditions. (Sherry, 1979, p. 610). However, as multiple passages demonstrate, Austen gives this term a specific meaning. Elizabeth uses the phrase in a conversation with Lady Catherine to describe the social interactions and activities that her younger sisters enjoy, regardless of the marital status or inclinations of their older siblings. “But really, Ma’am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early.” (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 116).

Comparably, this use of society is demonstrated by another character, Mary. “While I can have my mornings to myself,” said [Mary], “it is enough. - I think it no sacrifice to join occasionally in evening engagements. Society has claims on us all; and I profess myself one of those who consider intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable for every body.” (Austen, 2016, p. 63). In these contexts, “society” refers to close relationships or social interaction rather than customs, laws, or traditions. Similarly, social refers to sociability in general rather than just societal structures. (Sherry, 1979, p. 611). It can be crucial for pupils to fully understand the cultural meanings of such terms as their definitions can vary depending on the context. Pupils might misunderstand these terms and miss the range of interpersonal dynamics that are represented in the novel if they are not given the correct context.

Additionally, as pupils examine the language of a work, they become more conscious of the subtleties of language and its ability to transmit ideas, feelings, and intricate stories. A greater awareness of the methods literary works employ to communicate meaning can be developed by analysing the literary devices employed in older literature. This understanding encompasses the study of multiple genres, periods in history, and cultural settings, expanding pupils’ literary perspectives and fostering analytical interaction with a text. For L2 learners, examining language in works of literature from the nineteenth century offers numerous benefits. Pupils who read older literature are exposed to a wider range of syntax and structures than those found in traditional language learning materials. Reading and analysing also help pupils become more proficient in comprehension, English syntax, and complicated sentence structures. (Martohardjono et al., 2005, p. 1539).

Nineteenth-century novels can add additional insight through the use of linguistic features to characterise individual speakers and by employing broader linguistic beliefs for fictional

purposes. Such novels can provide valuable perspectives about the social history of the language. (Hodson, 2016, p. 43). It is important to analyse the language of older literature because it allows for an investigation of linguistic choices, cultural contexts, and layers of meaning. The way pupils recognise and understand challenging vocabulary in literature can be improved by a linguistic investigation. Finally, the level of inquiry has to be adapted to the reading levels of pupils. They can not learn much from books they are unable to read. (L. Allington, 2002, p. 16).

3.2 Teaching Pre-Twentieth Century Literature

Within literature education, the debate regarding the choice of texts for young readers is complex. Teachers in England have historically had to work within a curriculum that assigns specific texts and authors to pupils; this has led to discussion about whether or not these requirements improve or restrict the learning process (Atkinson, 2006, p. 51.). The consideration extends to the integration of pre-twentieth century literature with current and modern texts, a combination meant to assist pupils in developing a fair and applicable appreciation for literature. The difficulty is not only in choosing texts that pupils will connect with, but also in making sure that different authors and genres are represented. Furthermore, arguments over the choice of literature from the pre-twentieth century may affect teachers' perspectives and, as a result, negatively impact their approaches to teaching (Atkinson, 2006, pp 51-52.).

The LK20 curriculum in Norway gives teachers greater flexibility to select the texts to teach, including the literature selection and teaching methods to be used, in contrast to the prescriptive approach seen in England. Teachers may find this independence to be both liberating and daunting, particularly when it comes to adding pre-twentieth century literature to the syllabus. In addition, it may require an excessive amount of time to ensure that historical texts are understandable and pertinent to pupils in addition to represent a variety of authors and genres. This complexity is increased by the fact that these older texts must be balanced with other requirements, and many teachers may feel that they lack the necessary time or motivation or that the material is not sufficiently relevant for L2 teaching.

Nevertheless, teaching English literature has deeper ethical significance and moral values. This justification, which highlights literature's ethical role, has long been used to support the value of literature in the classroom and in larger cultural contexts. (Erll et al., 2008, p. 35).

To keep introducing pre-twentieth century texts is an important pedagogical topic in literary education, because of the shift in media and reading. Atkinson (2006) explores strategies for getting pupils interested in such works, pointing out that the strategies used for modern texts can be equally useful and relevant when talking about older literature. (p. 55). Activities aimed at bridging the cultural and temporal divide between pupils and the literature are part of the preparation for reading these texts. To introduce themes, settings, characters, and even genre, improvisational exercises can be beneficial. (Atkinson, 2006, pp. 55-56). Pupils will gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural context in which the events take place by doing this. (Atkinson, 2006, p. 56). To explore the character dynamics and societal expectations in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, we could use role-playing exercises. Alternatively, we could use art and fashion to create visual mood boards that depict Regency England. Furthermore, according to Atkinson (2006), multimedia materials such as TV or film adaptations of novels can help pupils comprehend and visualise the settings and moods found in the texts. However, to prevent prescriptive imagery from overshadowing pupils' own interpretations, teachers must choose when or if to implement these adaptations. The challenge extends to the length, pace, and complexity of novels from this period. Current educational approaches may include dividing lengthy novels into manageable sections and selectively reading substantial or significant sections aloud in class to maintain narrative momentum and pupil interest (pp. 57-58). An exploration of how to teach *Pride and Prejudice*, in particular, follows in chapter 6.

However, while the challenges are significant, it is important to clarify that the objective of incorporating *Pride and Prejudice* into the syllabus extends beyond merely sparking engagement among all pupils in the classroom. Realistically, it is not a reality to expect that everyone will develop a genuine interest or take a liking to the novel. Instead, the primary goal is to apply critical literacy pedagogy and use *Pride and Prejudice* as a tool for pupils to learn more about specific historical perspectives and for pupils to recognise the importance of understanding more about our past through literature.

3.3 Evolution of Reading

When exploring the role of English literature in the twenty-first century, it is noted that many pupils, including those in Norway, exhibit a declining interest in reading, particularly longer texts. This trend is demonstrated by research from the University of Stavanger, which shows a notable decline in upper secondary English literature course enrolment. (Herigstad, 2014, p. 90, as cited in Habegger-Conti, 2015). Teachers have observed a general reluctance among

pupils to engage with literature, perceiving it as obligatory rather than an enjoyable activity. (Herigstad, 2014, p. 54 as cited in Habegger-Conti, 2015). This loss of interest is mirrored by a nationwide drop in pupils choosing English Literature and Culture in favour of subjects such as Social Studies English and International English, perceived as more relevant to current events which has caused some upper secondary schools to stop offering the course all together. (Skogstrøm, 2013, as cited in Habegger-Conti, 2015).

However, Iversen (2012) contend that literature has unique benefits. The concepts travelling space and time, understanding of human minds, and the growth of empathy and understanding are all made possible by literature. (pp. 212-213). Critical literacy is as an important skill for understanding rhetorical strategies and being aware of political and social influence in writing. Making literature relevant for pupils who have always lived in the digital age and are more interested in new media than traditional novels, is a challenge. However, an advantage of older novels is their widely digital availability due to being out of copyright, making them accessible through platforms such as Project Gutenberg. This digital accessibility makes it easier to integrate these texts into the classroom. It is not always possible to acquire enough copies of more recent publications, but with most older literature this would not be an issue. Yet, modern times call for innovative approaches to literature, ensuring its continued relevance in the digital age. However, in order to ensure literature's continued relevance in the digital age, current times demand creative approaches to it.

According to Habegger-Conti (2015), who cites Hayles (2010), reading has to be redefined in the context of contemporary multimedia environments that combine text with sounds, images, and animations. This shift in literacy raises concerns about the particular abilities needed for critical reading in a world where video games, films, TV series, and comic books rule the world of digital media. (p. 112). Hayles (2010) expresses concern about the potential loss of critical reading skills, particularly close reading, which concentrates on an in-depth analysis of the text and has proven effective with print media such as novels and short stories. However, this approach relies on what Hayles (2010) refers to as "deep attention," a cognitive mode that is better suited for extended, focused reading sessions than the "hyper attention" that is required by new and online media and is typified by quick task switching and a preference for high stimulation. (as cited in Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 113).

The development of comprehensive literacy skills in upper secondary education is based on the goals outlined in LK20, the English subject curriculum. These objectives include

analysing and interpreting fictional texts, comparing factual texts on the same topic from various sources, and critically assessing their reliability. However, as studies conducted at the UIS' Norwegian Reading Centre show, these objectives are challenged by shifting reading habits. (Habegger-Conti, 2015, p. 113). Furthermore, according to Nielsen (2006) reading online frequently entails scanning and skimming rather than in-depth, critical reading.

Nielsen (2006) established through an eye-tracking study that when reading online, people do not read the text word-for-word, rather, they read the text in a "F" pattern, reading only the first few lines of the text across. Following this, readers usually only move along the left side, which means that they pay little attention to the right side of the webpage and the majority of the lower text. Nielsen (2009) concludes "exhaustive reading is rare" when reading online. This pattern raises questions about the ability of pupils to meet the requirements of in-depth learning and interpretation, two essential LK20 curriculum components.

Pupils' ability to critically analyse a variety of information sources and engage deeply with complex literary texts may be impacted by the shift towards superficial reading online. For pupils who want to pursue higher education in professions such as politics, journalism, medicine, or law, mastering close reading is crucial. This ability still vitally important and is by no means out of date in our contemporary world, where success in a wide range of academic and professional fields depends on the ability to comprehend complex texts and subtle understanding. Finally, it is also important for building an informed citizen who understand the nuance of the information they receive from all types of media.

4. LK20 - The Norwegian Curriculum

This chapter investigates the Norwegian Curriculum of Education, hereby referred to as LK20, and its relevance to older literature, identifying core curriculum values necessary for the following literary analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*. To achieve this objective, the section will first examine the core curriculum values in LK20 that are especially applicable to the study of pre-twentieth century literature. It will then investigate the relevant competence aims outlined in the English subject plan, as well as discuss didactic and pedagogical theories related to teaching literature. Considering that English is mandatory only in Vg1 General Studies and Vg1 Vocational Studies in upper secondary school, this thesis will centre on the competence aims of the Vg1 English subject plan.

The curriculum, LK20, is a comprehensive framework that shapes the educational system in Norway, through years 1-13. It outlines the learning objectives, subject content, and core values that guide teaching and learning in Norwegian schools. The implementation of the LK20 curriculum happened throughout the school year 2020/21 and significantly altered the educational system. It involved a comprehensive revision of the LK06 curriculum and a re-evaluation of its principles. LK20 introduced a new approach to various subjects, including English, particularly allowing for a greater degree of flexibility for individual teachers.

Because the curriculum is now more flexible, there are more pedagogical options available. It further allows me, as a teacher, to employ my knowledge of early nineteenth-century literature to enhance the learning experience, and it creates possibilities for other teachers to use their particular expertise. This is in-depth literature learning, which LK20 emphasises. (Udir, 2019, p. 13). Introducing in-depth literature learning is particularly suitable for improving pupils' critical literacy skills, as it provides them with the resources they need to analyse and comprehend complex texts and their contexts. It aligns with the revised competence aims, core elements, and the curriculum's increased focus on interdisciplinary topics and in-depth learning. This approach not only supplements the educational experience but also makes it possible to provide pupils with a more effective literary education, tailored to meet their various learning needs.

4.1 Human Dignity

Human dignity, as a fundamental value in the LK20 curriculum, holds significant relevance in the English subject, particularly when studying older literature such as *Pride and Prejudice*. Literature from the nineteenth century frequently examines social themes and addresses how people are treated depending on their appearance or social standing. (Mukherjee, 2019, p. 69). The historical nature of novels and the distance they provide allows pupils to see the inequalities in the society they are reading about more clearly than they might if they were reading contemporary novels. The Ministry of Education and Research (2017) discusses how the school system has a responsibility to ensure that human dignity and the values that support it form the foundation of all activities and interactions. By recognising and acknowledging the inherent value of every individual, teachers demonstrate care and uphold human dignity as a fundamental value in both the school and society. (Udir, 2019, p. 5).

Human rights, which are based on the inviolability of human dignity, are an integral part of our constitutional state. These are principles that are prevalent to all people, regardless of their origins or backgrounds. Equal rights and equality have been fought for throughout history, and they still need to be upheld and reinforced today. The school should provide knowledge and promote attitudes that safeguard these values. (Udir, 2019, p. 5).

Udir (2019) further states that all pupils should be treated equally, free from discrimination, and provided with equal opportunities to be able to make independent choices. It is critical to acknowledge and value the diversity of pupils to give each person a sense of inclusion in both the classroom and society as a whole. By upholding human dignity and promoting these values, the education system plays a vital role in creating an inclusive and respectful environment that nurtures the growth and development of every individual. (p. 5). *Pride and Prejudice*, the novel examines the ramifications of judging others based on superficial factors or hasty decisions, emphasising the importance of understanding and acknowledging the diverse social standings and individual values of each character. An exploration of themes found in *Pride and Prejudice*, provides a platform for pupils to understand more historical social dynamics and their relevance to modern societal issues. Such discussions align with the LK20 curriculum's focus on human dignity. However, it additionally contributes to a more in-depth understanding of historical context in literature.

4.2 Identity and Cultural Diversity

Identity and cultural diversity are another component of the LK20 core curriculum, focusing on its significance in fostering an inclusive educational environment that respects and celebrates cultural differences. “The school shall provide pupils with historical and cultural knowledge that will provide them with a solid foundation in life and assist every pupil in preserving and developing his or her identity in an inclusive and diverse environment.” (Udir, 2019, p. 5). Pupils develop a deeper understanding of their place in society and the values that bind us all together by learning about history and culture. Common reference frameworks are essential for promoting diversity and an appreciation of multiple opinions and perspectives while also providing space for individuality and a sense of community. (Udir, 2019, p. 6). Furthermore, the encounters that pupils have with various cultural expressions and traditions can help them form their identity. A well-established society should be built on the principles of inclusion and diversity.

Reading novels where identity plays an essential part in the story helps pupils gain a deeper understanding of society’s underlying structures as well as a broader understanding of various cultural expressions and practices. Because such literary explorations can show how individual identities are shaped by their cultural, social, and historical contexts, they can also promote empathy and awareness. The thesis further discusses examples of explorations in more detail later, for instance how Charlotte Lucas chooses the security of a loveless marriage. This becomes understandable in the context of a society where women of her station were unable to work for a living but did not inherit enough money to live comfortably. Pupils are encouraged to understand the intricacies of identity formation and how they affect individual and societal experiences through the use of appropriate novels. Furthermore, it assists in their recognition of diversity, encouraging a more accepting and comprehending worldview—important in today’s interconnected global society.

4.3 Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness

Schools have a vital role in fostering pupils’ curiosity, scientific and critical thinking, and ethical awareness. This involves teaching pupils how to employ reasoning and inquiry systematically when encountering practical challenges, phenomena, and various forms of knowledge. (Udir, 2019, p. 7). To uncover new information or insight, established ideas must be subject to scrutiny and criticism by the employment of theories, methods, arguments, experiences, and evidence. Exploring the origins of concepts in older literature and cultural expressions can help pupils develop critical awareness, teaching them how to critically

evaluate ideas. Pupils should be capable of assessing various sources of knowledge and thinking critically about how knowledge is developed. (Udir, 2019, p. 7). Additionally, it is critical that pupils recognise the limitations of their own perspectives, experiences, and beliefs. Though several studies have claimed to be effective there is not a critical consensus regarding whether critical thinking is something that can be explicitly taught. (El Soufi & Beng Huat See, 2019). Critical literacy, however, has more evidence behind the teaching methods, and although it is not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum, and there is no direct translation in Norwegian, it seems to fit the spirit of the curriculum.

To promote the creation of new knowledge, education should strike a balance between upholding preexisting knowledge and promoting innovative and exploratory thinking. Another crucial component, ethical awareness, involves striking a balance between various considerations and is necessary for individuals to become self-aware and reflective. Schools play a crucial role in fostering pupils' capacity to make ethical judgments and increasing their awareness of moral dilemmas, thereby instilling a sense of moral responsibility towards themselves and others (Udir, 2019, p. 7). Critical literacy supports ethical awareness by being aware of hegemonic narratives and the silencing of marginalised voices.

In addition to being necessary for learning in a variety of contexts, critical literacy and ethical awareness are also critical for the development of sound judgement. A person's capacity for reflection, judgement, and evaluation is necessary for practical work in a variety of fields, including the arts, vocations, and professions. Fundamentally, critical thinking is the process of methodically analysing, assessing, and interpreting data, concepts, and arguments to make well-informed decisions. (Swanson, 2014, p. 126). Understanding and considering different perspectives and values is necessary for ethical awareness and to make morally sound decisions. By promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness, schools encourage pupils to become active participants in society, equipped with necessary skills to navigate challenges and contribute positively to the world around them. It might however be difficult to know how to approach this.

Rogers (2013) urges approaching critical literacy as “a perspective on texts, discourses, and societal practices” (p. 16) that appreciates diversity and recognises the complexities of language and power dynamics. Through employing critical literacy, pupils will learn to identify and interpret the underlying messages and meanings in the text, further enhancing their understanding of literature's role in reflecting and shaping societal attitudes. This

approach not only adds to their analytical skills but also fosters a deeper awareness of the power of language in social contexts.

Such skills become particularly valuable when engaging in discussions about topics that lack a singular, definitive answer, which frequently occurs in ethical dilemmas. This requires the ability to think critically and be able to understand the reasons for people developing the opposing views even if one strongly disagrees with them. Although social studies classes in upper secondary education in Norway frequently address such questions, literary analysis in the English subject also touches on these issues in a useful and unique way. Novels are well-suited for exploring such ethical considerations, including *Pride and Prejudice*. This novel can add depth to ethical considerations by allowing pupils to discuss character morality and social critique.

4.4 Democracy and Participation

According to LK20's core curriculum section on democracy and participation, the school has a vital role in providing pupils with practical experiences and an understanding of democracy. Teaching should help pupils develop belief in democratic values. (Udir, 2019, p. 9). They should gain an understanding of the fundamental principles and rules of democracy, emphasising the importance of protecting them. Active participation in society involves upholding democratic values, which include mutual respect, tolerance, freedom of speech and religion. Throughout their educational journey, pupils should be encouraged to actively participate and promote democratic values.

Additionally, schools are essential in fostering democratic values that counter prejudice and discrimination. The pupils should be taught to respect and value diversity and to resolve disputes respectfully. In a democratic society, all citizens have equal rights and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. (Udir, 2019, p. 10). Participants in the school community should learn to accept and understand diverse viewpoints, whether they belong to the minority or majority. This involves promoting collaboration, open dialogue, and respectful disagreement. Embracing diversity and ensuring inclusivity for all necessitates a grasp of values and the application of professional judgment. Furthermore, schools must serve as platforms where children and young people experience democracy in action. Pupils should feel heard day-to-day at school, and be able to impact matters that concern them. They should gain practical experience and engage in various forms of democratic participation, whether through councils, advisory bodies, or within their subject-based work. The dialogue between

teachers, pupils, and the home environment should be based on mutual respect. When pupils' voices are valued and heard, they develop the ability to make informed decisions. These experiences hold immediate value and prepare pupils to become responsible and active citizens in society. (Udir, 2019, p. 10).

4.5 The Core Curriculum of the English Subject Plan

The main components of the English subject plan encompass communication, language learning, and working with texts in English. Language is fundamentally about communication, which is highlighted in the English subject plan as the process of meaning-making through language use. (Udir, 2019, p. 2). The pupils should be urged to apply appropriate oral and written communication strategies in a variety of settings.

Pupils need to be given opportunities to express themselves authentically and interact in real-life situations, fostering their ability to effectively convey their thoughts and ideas. Language learning in the English subject plan focuses on developing language awareness and knowledge of English as a semiotic system of meaning-making. Pupils learn the pronunciation of phonemes, vocabulary, word structure, syntax, and text composition. (Udir, 2019, p. 2). This will provide them the ability to make decisions and apply various approaches to language strategies in their interactions and communication. Additionally, learning a language helps pupils make connections between English and other languages they may be familiar with, which helps them comprehend the structure of English in a larger linguistic context. Furthermore, meaning-making includes critical literacy skills and this takes it beyond surface meaning.

One of the most important aspects of language learning in the subject plan is working with texts in English. A wide range of spoken and written forms, printed and digital media, as well as styles and genres, are all included in the definition of texts. (Udir, 2019, p. 3). Through engaging with various texts, pupils develop their knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity. They can gain insight into diverse ways of living, thinking, and traditions of indigenous peoples. By reflecting on, interpreting, and critically assessing texts, pupils not only enhance their language skills but also deepen their understanding of culture and society. (Udir, 2019, p. 3). Through the development of intercultural competence, pupils are better equipped to understand and accept different views, communication patterns, and ways of life.

These elements of communication, language learning, and working with texts in English can seamlessly be integrated into the teachings of older literature.

Through an exploration of older literary works, pupils can engage in meaningful conversation by analysing and discussing the themes, characters, and literary techniques employed in these texts. This develops their oral and written communication skills, as they practice expressing their thoughts, interpretations, and reflections within literature.

Teaching older literature also has a connection to language learning. By being exposed to the vocabulary, syntax, and literary devices used by authors, pupils improve their awareness of language. When pupils are exposed to the distinctive linguistic constructions and expressions found in these texts, they can develop a deeper understanding of the English language as a system. Moreover, they acknowledge the interrelationships between English and other languages, enabling pupils to improve their language proficiency and cultural awareness. (Duraku & Ramadani, 2023, p. 14). The more challenging language of older texts heightens an awareness of language as a living, changing and context-specific element. For example, the change of meaning/use of certain words such as “entail” and “society”, discussed in chapter 3.1.2. Pupils are encouraged to improve their communication, critical literacy, and overall language proficiency through the study of such literature, all of which are essential components of the English subject plan’s core curriculum.

4.6 Relevant Competence Aims from Vg1 Vocational and General Studies

The curriculum's competence aims outline language skills that are important and will be used to evaluate pupils in a particular subject. A widespread use of literature can help achieve many of these competence goals, presented here, as the official translation from Udir. (2019).

- express oneself in a nuanced and precise manner with fluency and coherence, using idiomatic expressions and varied sentence structures adapted to the purpose, recipient, and situation
- read, discuss, and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts
- read, analyse, and interpret fictional texts in English

There is also a competence aim from the curriculum that can be met by studying pre-twentieth century literature specifically:

- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts

Older literature is particularly relevant for this competence aim. Many novels were written during significant historical periods, providing valuable insights into the norms and social dynamics of the time. Using ‘authentic’ texts from the period is a more effective exposure to language as discourse than merely reading modern representations of the time, because of the language authenticity and for pupils to understand the linguistic development of the language. Furthermore, such literature functions as commentary on the social conditions and ranks during the time it was written. Reading nineteenth-century fiction offers a glimpse into critical perspectives of a different time, highlighting the vast disparities between that time and the present. However, beyond recognising these differences, pupils also encounter continuities and persisting issues. It is not merely about drawing a line between the past and present, but also about exploring how societies evolve and are constantly subject to reinterpretation, and therefore open to debate. (Regan, 2001, p. 1). As a result, older literature functions as a solid foundation for classroom lessons regarding diversity and social conditions within a historical context.

Literary investigations into class, gender, and socioeconomic issues characterised the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and this was related to revolutions in France and America, discussions of social mobility in the context of the industrial revolution. These investigations also critically examined the status of women with regard to marriage and property. Women’s rights were severely restricted during this period, and they could often not inherit property and were considered their husbands’ property rather than equal partners in marriage. (Perkin, 2002, p. 13). This period also saw significant political discourse, including Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Maria* (1792), and debates in relation to the French Revolution of 1789 as well as subsequent British political unrest following in the next few decades, such as the Peterloo Massacre of 1819.

Through the experiences and perspectives of fictional characters, pupils can explore the complexities of social hierarchies, prejudice, discrimination, and the challenges faced by marginalised individuals in this period. These literary works present narratives that reflect the historical realities of different social groups, allowing pupils to engage in meaningful discussions and reflections on diversity and social conditions. While Austen may not explicitly comment on these issues, guiding pupils to recognise how these issues subtly influence her characters’ lives can help them develop an understanding of the historical

context in which it was written, and that discourse reveals social power structures in a covert way. Because the chosen novel was written by an English author in the nineteenth century, it is also a great example of culture and society that is specifically associated with the English-speaking world.

Although I have been arguing that *Pride and Prejudice* be taught in its historical context, adaptations of the novel can also teach us about the society which produced the adaptation. Studying adaptations opens up for discussions about remediation, and the language features and devices of multiple media forms. *Pride and Prejudice* can also be linked to this particular competence aim:

- discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different cultural forms of expression from different media in the English-language world, including music, film and gaming

Pride and Prejudice is among the many older literary works that have attained great popularity. The lasting relevance of *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen in the numerous adaptations it has inspired in various forms of media, such as film, television, and theatre. These adaptations often retell the story in different time periods and cultural contexts, displaying the continued relevance of its themes and characters. Studying literature such as *Pride and Prejudice* is crucial for understanding English as a cultural discourse because it remains a part of the modern cultural world, though in a layered, palimpsestuous way. This can further the pupils' comprehension of the English language through cultural expressions and its role in reflecting and shaping cultural identities and values. Through Austen, pupils' understanding of linguistic elements and literary devices can also be investigated.

Austen employs literal irony, which involves a speaker expressing a meaning in front of others that is not truly intended. (Sun, 2022, p. 74). For example, this is demonstrated by Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth. It serves as a humorous point in the novel, revealing his personality through Austen's ironic portrayal. Despite readers knowing Elizabeth will reject his proposal, Collins confidently persists in his advances, assuming she will accept. This application of irony becomes apparent when there is a clear disparity between Collins' expectations and the actual outcome. Through the ironic use of language, Austen satirises the notion of marriage based on money and status, urging readers to observe character development throughout the plot. (Sun, 2022, p. 74). Austen expresses her ironic perspective through the words and actions of characters, as demonstrated by Mrs. Bennet, "and she

continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about.” (Austen 1813/2916, p. 45). This highlights Mrs. Bennet’s foolishness and temperament, as well as her self-centred nature. ‘Nobody’ here means nobody in her immediate family. It also reflects her dissatisfaction with a society that values men’s wealth and social standing above her daughters.

Irony functions as a comedic tool in *Pride and Prejudice* and as a Horatian satiric purpose as a way to reveal society’s flaws in a subtle, humorous way. Dramatic irony is a prominent feature of the novel, with the stark contrast between appearance and reality highlighted at every turn. Wickham presents himself as sophisticated at first but is ultimately exposed as villainous. On the contrary, Mr. Darcy first comes across as ill-mannered, yet the reader comes to understand that he is actually a fine gentleman. Mr. Darcy becomes more attracted to Elizabeth despite Caroline Bingley’s attempts to dissuade him from her. Similarly, Mrs. Bennet’s schemes to secure eligible suitors for her daughters only succeed in driving them away. (Sumathi & Aleksander, 2017, p. 120). Yet Austen’s use of irony is free from bitterness or cynicism. It is amusing, yet not merely a tool for superficial wit. Instead, her irony provokes thoughtful reflection. In her hands, irony is neither indifferent nor irresponsible. While Austen is unwavering in her assessment of the moral principles that underpin these realities, she is objective in her observation and portrayal of life’s realities. It has a didactic teaching purpose, therefore making it suitable for teaching pupils ethics.

Austen consistently asserts her own ethos and values when addressing human behaviour. Consequently, rather than being a means of disdain, her irony functions as a tool of moral insight. (Sumathi & Aleksander, 2017, pp. 121-122). Using *Pride and Prejudice* to investigate language features and literary devices such as irony and wit aligns with the competence aim of discussing and reflecting on form, content, and language features in various cultural forms of expression. Subtle irony and witty language are prevalent in the novel and are crucial components of the literary heritage of the English-speaking world. By analysing these features in the context of the novel, pupils learn more about how language is used to convey meaning and social commentary. Irony, however, is very easily misinterpreted if it is neither your language nor your culture. Explicitly teaching how to recognise it, is important if people are not going to take ironic commentaries literally and thus miss important political messages and commentaries.

4.7 Theory of Teaching Literature

Although Norway is frequently regarded as a country where English is a foreign language, this viewpoint is not entirely accurate. The distinction between a second language (L2) and a foreign language is typically based on whether the language is spoken by the majority of the population as their first language (L1). (Alderson et al, 2015, p. 71). Nonetheless, the distinction between English as a foreign language and a second language becomes unclear in nations such as Norway where it is extensively taught and spoken. Crystal (2012) challenged the conventional classification by arguing that in regions such as Scandinavia, English is highly valued and regarded as essential. (p. 68). According to Rindal (2013/2019), increased exposure and proficiency in English have caused Norwegians to no longer perceive it as a foreign language. (p. 336). Taking these factors into account, it is more accurate to think of Norwegian pupils as L2 English learners who are straddling the line between it being a foreign language and a second language. However, this acknowledgement of proficiency overlooks the more complex components of language, which requires critical literacy and teaching of writing in context.

The English language holds significant importance in Norwegian education, as stated by Flognfeldt and Lund (2016, p. 15). Due to its necessity as a lingua franca in an increasingly globalised world and its practicality, it is accorded a high priority in all educational institutions. Given its vital role, it becomes necessary to guarantee the quality of English education. Because literature offers real-world and authentic input that pupils can interact with, it plays an essential role for language learning. (Khatib et al., 2011, p. 202). Literature, according to Maley (1989a), can address important and personally relevant subjects, which makes it an engaging resource for language learning. (Khatib et al., 2011, p. 202).

This authenticity is particularly evident in drama and novels, where conversations, expressions of feelings, functional phrases, and contextualised expressions provide a genuine language-learning experience, leaving an impression on learners' minds. Moreover, literary texts possess a unique ability to motivate language learners. Ghosn (2002) and Van (2009), as cited in Khatib et al., (2011), highlight the motivating aspect of literature, owing to its authentic contexts. However, not everyone can benefit from the motivational theory. It is necessary to acknowledge that not every pupil will enjoy reading *Pride and Prejudice*. People have very different reasons and preferences, so while some may be eager to read Austen, others will not be.

But rather than focusing solely on pupil motivation, the incentive for pupils to read *Pride and Prejudice* should emphasise the significant educational value it offers. Even though not every pupil will be immediately captured by the complexities of English landed gentry society in the nineteenth century, the novel offers an insightful look at deeper ideas including gender roles, social hierarchy, and the effects of personal prejudices. These topics are essential for developing critical thinking skills and empathy for other perspectives, in addition to helping pupils obtain a greater understanding of historical and cultural contexts. Therefore, the rationale for studying the novel lies not in the immediate gratification or motivation it might or might not inspire but in the essential knowledge and insights pupils gain, which can improve their academic development.

Beyond its role in language learning, literature plays a significant part in promoting cultural and intercultural awareness. As Van (2009) suggests, cited in Khatib et al., (2011), literature can promote understanding of different cultures, and in this day of globalisation, this is particularly important. Literature has the potential to reduce linguistic and cultural barriers in today's globalised society. (p, 205). Current educational perspectives encourage diversity of thought and experience, advocating for heterogeneity in which different points of view coexist. In contrast, a homogeneous approach presumes that everyone will have the same experience. This homogenous approach might entail teaching about universal human qualities in literature from the Western canon, yet we should view teaching literature as an exploration of different perspectives based on others' personal experiences.

The LK20 curriculum supports this shift by emphasising tolerance and understanding, suggesting that recognising and appreciating different viewpoints is an essential part of the learning process. (Udir, 2019). Exploring works of literature from many cultural backgrounds broadens pupils' perspective of the diversity of the world and fosters empathy and tolerance for differing viewpoints. An essential aspect to consider is the significance of fiction in this context. Hoff (2013) asserts the ability of fiction to create an illusion of reality enables pupils to confront their own preconceptions and entrenched opinions about societies that differ from their own, as they personally engage with literary texts (p. 31). When physical exposure to unfamiliar cultures and customs is impractical, for example when there is a temporal distance, as with reading older novels, literature can function as a way to explore the lives of others in a realistic way. By seeing the world through the eyes of the protagonist in that society, literature gives readers the chance to fully engage with a different culture and goes beyond simple observation. This results in a brief blending of the cultures of the protagonist and the reader,

which could lead to a deeper understanding of each. Additionally, since pupils are reading in their L2, sociolinguistic learning is enhanced.

Hoff (2013) describes this phenomenon as a “communicative experience,” in which pupils acquire a deeper understanding of foreign cultures as well as valuable self-awareness. (p. 32). Through their encounter with the text, pupils not only expand their knowledge of other cultures but also develop a better understanding of their own identity and perspectives. Reading helps pupils understand more about foreign cultures, but also their own background and identity as individuals. Nevertheless, teachers must be aware of any prejudice pupils may have when using literature to study foreign cultures. English classes may unintentionally uphold cultural stereotypes and prejudices against a foreign culture rather than challenging them if attitudes are not specifically addressed and preconceived notions are not deliberately challenged. (Hoff, 2013, p. 39). This assertion highlights how important it is for teachers to assist pupils in using literature to explore new cultures. Hoff (2013) contends that the intercultural competency development is difficult by nature and needs a focused teacher to help guide the process. (p. 43).

Teachers must be initiative-taking in promoting cultural awareness and empathy and encourage pupils to critically engage with literary texts and question their own assumptions. Through conscious work on attitudes, English lessons can be effective to subvert stereotypes and develop a genuine appreciation for different cultures. Moreover, teachers cannot always predict or control a classroom situation and controversial remarks can be made. Yet, such controversial remarks in the classroom can serve a purpose in exposing and challenging harmful prejudices. As discussed by Hoff (2013), who uses an example from a class discussion about a film, where the class discussed the language of African Americans. The pupils observed instances of contraction (‘Ain’t,’ ‘Y’all,’ ‘Gonna’) and double negation (‘I ain’t got none’) in the language and willingly explained and clarified the meanings of these expressions and their correct written forms.

In other words, they demonstrated a considerable level of intercultural understanding. When asked why not all Americans, or even all African Americans, speak this way, one pupil responded, “Well, it’s a cultural thing, isn’t it?” The pupil’s response demonstrates a positive attitude towards language and culture, promoting understanding and empathy. Another pupil argued that the language used by African Americans was indicative of their supposed lower intelligence compared to the white population. Other pupils challenged this argument by

citing examples of intelligent people of colour. (p. 39). Moreover, teaching the historical attitudes towards African American people in the United States, through *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), or *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), helps them understand the socio-cultural roots of prejudices and biased opinions, rather than accepting them as truisms.

It is essential to understand that anecdotal evidence might not be enough on its own to disprove or contradict such claims. In order to facilitate these conversations without unintentionally harming pupils, teachers must be well-prepared, encourage evidence-based conversations that address the underlying causes of these beliefs, and highlight the fallacies in such thinking. Investigating how discourse affects our worldview helps pupils to evaluate their own “truths” in a critical manner. The anecdote by Hoff (2013) provides an example of how dominant discourses, particularly those with racist undertones, can influence people’s beliefs. Through analysing how beliefs and attitudes have evolved over time, teachers can help pupils understand that opinions are not set in stone but rather shaped by their historical and cultural background. This prompts them to consider and appreciate the ambiguity of concepts like “truth” and “reality.”

Literature has a significant impact on how well pupils comprehend the language and the cultures that it represents. Furthermore, the language learning strategy of extensive reading, can be more beneficial to pupils’ language comprehension than traditional coursebooks or direct teacher instruction (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 311). Therefore, an essential objective of reading instruction should focus on assisting pupils in becoming more strategic and proficient learners. Reading instruction that emphasises strategic behaviour often encompasses multiple essential components. (Janzen & L. Stoller, 1998, p. 251). Reading strategies and their importance for improving reading comprehension should be introduced by the teacher and discussed in class. The teacher models strategic reading behaviours by reading aloud and thinking aloud. Along with reading and thinking aloud, pupils should be given feedback on the strategies they are using. The advantages of using reading strategies should also be emphasised to the class in order to highlight the significance of reading for real-world objectives like learning. Pupils should be aware that developing into strategic readers is a gradual process that can take years to develop. (Janzen & L. Stoller, 1998, p. 252).

By striking a balance of strategies, pupils can benefit from both the exploration of language through extensive reading and targeted instruction and clarification provided by teachers during guided activities. By using this all-encompassing method, pupils not only become

more proficient in the language but also gain a better grasp of its structure and usage, which enhances their overall language and cultural competency. Additionally, Munden & Sandhaug (2017) state that putting too much emphasis on the theoretical applications of grammar in language instruction can demotivate pupils and even instil fear in them. (p. 193).

Munden and Sandhaug's (2017) assertion raises an important point. Grammar is unquestionably crucial for language acquisition, but an overly rigid and formulaic approach can demotivate and overwhelm pupils. When pupils are faced with the complex rules of a language without sufficient context or meaningful communication, they may find language learning intimidating. The fear of making mistakes can hinder their willingness to engage in active communication and experimentation with the language. Furthermore, assuming that pupils do not learn syntax or vocabulary outside of school may be a significant misconception.

Language acquisition is a complex and dynamic process that occurs both inside and outside the classroom. In real-life situations, pupils are continuously exposed to authentic language use through a variety of media. Studying works such as Austen's, which highlight how language use and meaning-making have changed over time, can increase this exposure. Austen is a fitting example of how meanings were communicated differently in the past compared to how they are conveyed today, through the use of polite constructions and the sophisticated language. By engaging with this text, pupils not only learn about historical aspects of language but also understand that language and its interpretation are not temporally static. This insight encourages a greater understanding of the flexibility of language and how it shapes social interactions throughout history.

A significant obstacle to teaching literature and performing literary analysis in the classroom, however, is the pupils' lack of confidence and uncertainty about their ability to learn. They frequently underestimate the degree of their learning advancement and the extent to which they are actually learning (Hoff, 2013, p. 42). This obstacle is evident in pupils who are reluctant to actively participate in classroom discussions and shy away from talking when conducting an analysis of the content. This reluctance may be partially attributed to their previous experiences of writing reviews or plot summaries when exploring fiction, leading them to believe that their input lacks value unless they can meticulously recount every detail of the story. (Hoff, 2013, p. 38). It is important to note that summarising the plot is not the intent nor desirable outcome anyway. Instead, developing the ability to critically analyse

literature holds more educational value, which requires contextual knowledge, which will be provided in Chapter 6, 6.1 and 6.2. An approach that emphasises critical literacy would be useful to counter this schematic approach. Beyond the standard conventional assignments of writing reviews or plot summaries, a critical literacy approach concentrates on getting pupils to analyse and critically think about the underlying messages, values, and structures in a text. (Vasquez, 2017, pp. 7-8).

This challenges pupils to consider how language shapes reality, influences identity, and upholds social norms and inequalities. By adopting a critical stance, pupils are compelled to think about the author's intentions, the historical context of the story, and its effect on various target demographics. This fosters a deeper, more reflective engagement with literature, which enables pupils to recognise and critique the social, political, and cultural elements that are present in texts. Through critical literacy, pupils develop the skills to become more discerning readers and thinkers, capable of applying these critical perspectives to understand and challenge the world around them and understanding the socio-political dimensions of the language they are learning as well. For any approach to be successful, however, a welcoming and inclusive learning environment must be established. Pupils may feel more encouraged to share their thoughts and interpretations without fear of judgment, which helps them gain confidence in their analytical capabilities.

Additionally, the implementation of the K20 framework in the Norwegian school system has emphasised flexibility, interdisciplinary approaches, and the integration of modern technology within the LK20 curriculum. This approach aims to bridge the gap between traditional literary studies and contemporary digital literacy while empowering teachers to tailor their teaching strategies and texts to suit the evolving needs and interests of their pupils. (Udir, 2019). Because of the LK20 approach's adaptability, literature lessons can be modified to fit various classroom situations and pupil proficiency levels, increasing comprehension and engagement. Overall, literature provides authentic material for language acquisition, exposing pupils to real-life language samples and providing opportunities for the direct examination of language complexities. (Syuhda Uin & Kalijaga, 2017, p. 83). Reading literary texts facilitates language proficiency and fluency by immersing pupils in a dynamic language-learning environment where they encounter vocabulary, sentence structures, and idiomatic expressions in context (Brumfit & Carter, 1986, as cited in Syuhda Uin & Kalijaga, 2017).

5. Literary Analysis

The following chapter presents a literary analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Austen intending to identify and display prevalent characteristics and themes that hold value for L2 learners in Norwegian upper secondary classrooms. Central to this analysis is the relevance for incorporating older texts in the English L2 classroom. To overcome possible challenges, selecting the appropriate text for a particular group of language learners is essential. For example, lack of familiarity with certain literary genres and older literature can present difficulties. However, teachers can choose texts that are more in line with the pupil's prior literary knowledge or introduce new literary concepts and notions prior to introducing complex texts. This approach ensures that pupils are more ready to interact effectively with the material. (Khatib et al., 2011, p. 204). *Pride and Prejudice* can also be made familiar to pupils, by examining topics they are familiar with or can draw comparisons to. The chapter further analyses the application of critical literacy principles and the alignment with core values and the English subject plan outlined in the LK20 curriculum. The aim is to demonstrate how this novel can serve as an effective medium for facilitating language acquisition and cultural understanding, while also adhering to the educational standards and objectives set forth by the LK20 framework. Through this, *Pride and Prejudice* will be evaluated also for its literary value, but also for its potential to improve critical literacy, cultural competency, and engagement with English language learning among upper-secondary pupils in Norway.

Furthermore, this analysis explores the society presented of Regency England as depicted in the novel, uncovering characteristics within this specific historical context. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that the scope of this examination is inherently limited, focusing predominantly on the upper echelons of society. Austen offers a perspective that is not representative of the Regency period in its entirety but rather a glimpse into the lives of the landed gentry. Therefore, the themes and societal observations discussed herein pertain to this distinct segment of the population that Austen presents. This acknowledgment does not diminish the value of the analysis but rather situates it within the appropriate social and historical framework, emphasising that the insights gained are relevant to the particular part of society introduced in *Pride and Prejudice*.

5.1 Themes and Characteristics

Early nineteenth-century English society, known as the Regency period, is the setting for *Pride and Prejudice*. The Regency period, which is recognised for its important contributions to literature, art, architecture, fashion, and culture, was a prosperous time for the arts and intellectuals. (Arora, 2023, p. 230). The upper classes of society were the main beneficiaries of this period's elegance and cultural advancement, which are often associated with it. The general public faced enormous obstacles despite the success of the arts, which were made worse by the world's fastest population growth and consequent poverty. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen effectively portrays the landed gentry society. Her writing captures the intricacies of living in a patriarchal society, blending wit, humour, and realism. (Arora, 2023, p. 2030).

This historical and cultural setting provides more than just a backdrop for Austen's narrative and thematic development. This is a crucial distinction that is made between this thesis' critically literate approach to the conventional approach to Austen, popular engagement is frequently centred around romantic intrigue in stylish clothing. However, this thesis demonstrates that a true understanding of the text must be located in the historical contextual knowledge. For L2 pupils, exploring this context is essential for understanding the novel's underlying concepts and themes, as well as drawing parallels and contrasts to their own cultural experiences. LK20 states the importance for pupils to understand themselves through learning to understand other cultures. (Udir, 2019). The idea is that by observing how social context shapes beliefs and values, people come to realise how much their society has shaped them as well.

The Regency period, with its distinct etiquette, fashion, and social values, gives pupils a chance to explore a time where societal norms had a significant impact on personal relationships and life choices. By analysing the novel within its cultural and historical context, pupils are encouraged to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural values shape societal norms and individual lives. Engaging with the cultural and historical context fosters critical thinking and cultural empathy, providing pupils with the skills they need to navigate and comprehend the complexity of the novel and also an awareness of cultural influences in their own and other people's lives. This subsection undertakes an examination of the central themes of the novel and will be pivotal in teaching *Pride and Prejudice* to Vg1 pupils.

5.1.1 Women's Position in Society

Pride and Prejudice centres on the lives of women, representing the limited range of domestic experiences of women during a time of significant national and international upheaval. At a time when these voices were seldom heard in public, Austen's focus on women's lives is noteworthy. Austen proves insight on women's roles and gender norms during the Regency period in this way. The representation of female characters explores the limitations faced by women in attaining financial and personal security, as well as the expectations placed on them by society. Historical narratives often romanticise the Regency period, praising it for its gentlemanly treatment of women. Beneath this, though, lies a more complex reality: a social norm centred on male supremacy and an expectation that women defer to men. This period was characterised by legal and social frameworks that granted men freedoms and security far beyond those of women, who were regarded as subordinate in both marital and familial roles. (Arora, 2023, p. 231). Young (1999) states "Their identity and their fate —were defined and controlled by men— fathers, husbands, or seducers" (Young, 1999, as cited in, Arora, 2023, p. 231).

The gender disparities are subtly addressed in the book, as they are integrated into the lives of the characters and the society they inhabit. Through the experiences of the characters, it not only depicts the gender dynamics of the time, but also subtly remarks on them. Austen gives Elizabeth agency, intelligence, and wit while also showing her to be well aware of their constrained social roles. The complicated web of societal expectations is navigated by the Bennet sisters, especially Elizabeth and Jane, who each reject the idea that their value is exclusively based on their marital prospects. Elizabeth has an independent spirit, making her a striking contrast to the subservient ideal of womanhood of the time. Through these characters and their interactions, Austen illustrates the complex realities of gender roles, highlighting the tension that exists between personal desires and society expectations as well as the pursuit of happiness in the face of social norms.

Elizabeth, in a dialogue illustrating the gender norms of her time, expresses a sentiment that speaks to the challenges of navigating a society that is controlled by rigid standards regarding the achievements of women. Her conversation with Mr. Darcy provides an insight on the social expectations that are put on women, and her remarks criticise these expectations. "I am no longer surprised at your knowing *only* six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing *any*." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 29). This quote from Elizabeth illustrates her scepticism towards the narrow societal standards for women. Though, Elizabeth does not

really think that the accomplishments are impossible for any woman to achieve, but the exaggeration highlights how difficult the expectations are for most women to reach.

Austen uses irony to make this point, and displaying this to the pupils is needed in order for them to understand how such remarks are meant to be understood. Elizabeth's remark highlights the absurdity of such criteria in a society where a woman's worth is closely linked to her capacity to meet a specific set of accomplishments, ranging from musical abilities to language proficiency. It refutes the idea that a woman's value is based on how well she performs these tasks, which are meant to increase her attractiveness to potential husbands rather than to support her happiness or personal development. Through Elizabeth, Austen challenges a patriarchal system that minimises women's intelligence and emotional potential in favour of marriageability. By using this line as a critical lens, Austen explores the narrow range of agency available to women. This resistance becomes apparent in Elizabeth's character, who stands up for her worth in a society that seeks to confine her.

In this conversation, Elizabeth critiques the arbitrary focus on "accomplishments" as a measure of a woman's worth, Austen draws parallels to Mary Wollstonecraft's criticism in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Wollstonecraft argued that this emphasis placed on "accomplishments" actually degrades women as seen through this passage: "Besides, whilst they are only made to acquire personal accomplishments, men will seek for pleasure in variety, and faithless husbands will make faithless wives; such ignorant beings, indeed, will be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, nor allowed any civil right, they attempt to do themselves justice by retaliation." (Wollstonecraft, 1792/2021). Wollstonecraft (1792) addresses the detrimental consequences of confining women to the pursuit of personal accomplishment, which can hinder their moral and intellectual development. She discusses the limited educational opportunities for women and the role that society usually assigns to them, emphasising superficial rather than essential and meaningful skills. Elizabeth's stance suggests a similar sentiment, highlighting the disparity between superficial achievements and genuine value in a woman.

Additionally, through the interactions of the Bennet sisters and their community, the expectations and role of women are explored. Austen also criticises the limited variety of activities, education, and independence that were available to women during the Regency period. Women were expected to excel in domestic skills and maintain a decorum that reflects well on their family, yet their access to broader educational opportunities or participation in

public life was severely restricted. This contrast is evident in the novel's portrayal of female accomplishments as primarily means of advancing their marriage prospects rather than for intellectual achievements. Meanwhile, men were free to engage in a variety of pursuits, from education to careers and public affairs, underlining the disparity in gender expectations. Austen's narrative underscores the frustrations and constraints faced by women who wish to step beyond the narrowly defined roles society has imposed upon them.

The difference of gender roles is described through the characters daily activities and responsibilities, exemplified by the contrast between the pursuits of the Bennet sisters and their father. The Bennet sisters frequently participate in handiwork, an activity deemed suitable and proper for women. The motivation behind the women's engagement in domestic crafts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be limited to only one understanding, however. These activities served different purposes such as artistic expression, household duty, financial necessity, or leisure. (Edwards, 2006, p. 11).

Nonetheless, gendered theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggested there was inherent differences in abilities between men and women, leading to a clear division between amateur female crafters and professional male artisans. (Edwards, 2006, p. 11). This gendered perspective was reinforced through education and literature, directing women's creative efforts towards the home. The importance of handicrafts in women's lives developed as a result of prevailing social attitudes. (Edwards, 2006, p. 11). Handicrafts like needlework, embroidery, and other crafts were valued as vital skills that enhanced a woman's success in the home as well as being enjoyable hobbies.

The expectations placed on women by society to be proficient in domestic crafts, both as a virtue and a requirement for their future roles as wives and mistresses of households, are reflected in the novel's numerous mentions of these activities. For instance, Elizabeth takes her sewing when she visits Jane at Netherfield to tend to her illness. On the other hand, Mr. Bennet's solitary leisure activity of reading and spending most of his time in his library represents his access to the public affairs, political, and economic spheres, which were largely closed off to women. This demonstrates the narrow range of knowledge accessible to women as well as the gendered division of labour in the home and in the arts. Through these everyday activities, Austen questions the gender roles that restrict women's opportunities, showcasing how societal norms dictate the distribution of knowledge, power, and agency.

The exploration of gender roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, particularly how societal norms influence the distribution of knowledge and power provides a foundation for pupils to explore critical literacy. By engaging with Austen and the restrictions placed on women's freedoms and opportunities, pupils can develop an understanding of how gender expectations have historically shaped peoples' lives and continue to do so. Through critical literacy, pupils are encouraged to question and analyse these societal constructs, comparing them with contemporary gender roles and expectations. This approach deepens their comprehension of the text and what Austen is trying to convey, and also fosters critical literacy skills that are essential for navigating and interpreting texts and media they encounter daily. Chapter 6.2 elaborates on how to teach a specific passage from the novel, in relation to critical literary skills.

Educating pupils about gender roles in *Pride and Prejudice* helps them understand gender concepts by putting the historical background of women's struggle for equality and autonomy into context. Through an analysis of the limitations encountered by Elisabeth, her sisters, Charlotte Lucas, and the other female characters in the novel, we can initiate conversations about the structural injustices which have led to change. This invites pupils to consider how Austen challenges the traditional roles that are expected of women through her characters' aspirations that go beyond what is expected of them by society. Teachers can encourage a critical understanding of how gender roles have changed and where some limitations still exist in contemporary society by making connections between the novel's themes and social issues.

Engaging in these dialogues about gender roles plays a crucial role in teaching pupils about the socio-cultural constructs that inform our understanding of ourselves. Brady (1994) discusses the importance of this. For a diverse and democratic society to flourish, discussions around literacy must recognise the variety of perspectives present. Achieving the goal of nurturing critically minded citizens, committed to the democratic values of justice and equality, and equipped to confront oppression and discrimination, requires a comprehensive approach to literacy. (Brady, 1994, p. 142). Furthermore, the approach should encourage pupils to identify and challenge the ideological and social barriers that hinder these ideals. Essentially, literacy should encompass not just the basic functional literacy but also extend to understanding cultural literacy and fostering the ability to critique and analyse societal structures through critical literacy. (Brady, 1994, p. 142). Therefore, reading literature through a critical lens can be a starting point for encouraging critical thinking in pupils. This is achieved by discussions on gender roles through an analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Howe (1972) highlights the close relationship that exists between feminism and literature, pointing out that historically, writing has been one of the few professions that is open to women. (p. 369). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, female romance writers faced marginalisation because of their chosen genre and gender. Many women writers had to publish anonymously or under male pseudonyms in order to circumvent patriarchal norms, despite their contributions (Simon, 2017, p. 55). Their writings, mostly romance novels, acted as a form of protest against the expectations society placed on women. Through reasoned discourse, this movement expressed enlightenment ideals of women's liberation (Simon, 2017, p. 55). Austen's portrayal of gender roles and societal expectations in *Pride and Prejudice* reflects her own views and experiences as a woman living in Regency England. As a female author in a male-dominated literary world, Austen herself navigated the constraints of her times' gender norms.

Given the historical context of female authorship and the examination of gender dynamics in *Pride and Prejudice*, this novel could be used as a resource for teaching consciousness of gendered inequalities and social expectation in the classroom. Hayik's (2016) research within the EFL classroom demonstrates that incorporating novels into the curriculum can gradually alter pupils' perceptions, fostering critical reflection on societal gender norms. These literary works, by depicting women as resilient, encourage pupils to critically evaluate traditional gender roles. Pupils can gain a greater awareness and critical perspective of the power structures in their own society by studying Austen's critical engagement with the gendered expectations of her time. While many pupils will be critically aware of traditional gender roles, they may be less conscious of how this can unintentionally limit their own or others' opportunities. *Pride and Prejudice* can facilitate a thorough discussion on the principles of gender division, including the pursuit of gender equality and the criticism of social norms. Austen's use of irony and satire to challenge and subvert these norms not only reflects her subtle resistance to gender expectations but also functions as a tool for engaging pupils with the complexities of this critique and the ways of making-meaning that constitute critical literacy. This can help develop more nuanced readers.

Pride and Prejudice is a fictional work; however, fiction possesses many qualities transferable to learning. Jarvis (2019) argues that fiction is a resource for fostering critical thinking and learning about gender and power dynamics. It can be employed as a feminist pedagogical tool, using literary narratives to examine and critically address the origins and implications of gender differences.

Fiction encourages readers to reassess their understanding of gender theory and confront their biases regarding gender and power, thereby facilitating critical reflection. (pp. 3-4). Likewise, Boaz (2019) suggests that incorporating fiction into educational strategies can help pupils explore and deepen their comprehension of complex social and political topics. By integrating *Pride and Prejudice* into the curriculum, teachers can provide pupils with an exemplification of the historical context of gender movements, foster critical thinking about gender roles through fiction, and inspire a deeper understanding of feminist elements and its relevance in both literature and society.

5.1.2 The Importance of Marriage

In *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage is a theme integrated into the overall narrative, serving as the point in which the plot develops around. This exploration of marriage goes beyond the mere union of individuals, exploring its implications for social standing, economic security, and personal fulfilment within the confines of society. Through the matrimonial prospects and outcomes of the characters, it offers a critical examination of the motivations behind marriage, ranging from financial necessity to the pursuit of genuine attraction. This section looks at how marriage is portrayed in the novel and its complex meaning.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage is portrayed not only as a plot device but also as an angle through which the Regency period's social structure is examined. A sarcastic tone regarding the societal pressures and expectations surrounding the institution of marriage is immediately established by the opening line, which asserts that "a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 3). This is a statement full of irony because it represents the views of eager mothers to marry off their daughters and village gossip. It does, however, introduce the reader to Austen's ironic tone immediately, and consequently, the tone in which Austen addresses society. Elizabeth and her perspective on marriage distinctly sets her apart from other characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Notably, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792/2021) suggests a companionate marriage is a more equal marriage – a woman is able to converse with her husband as an equal rather than be like a child. Elizabeth also has a more thoughtful, principled position. Her rejection of Mr. Collins's proposal, in which she states, "You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make *you* so," embodies her belief that compatibility and respect are more important than financial security. (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 77).

Elizabeth's refusal to marry for convenience or social pressure is further illustrated in her initial rejection of Mr. Darcy, emphasising her refusal was because of her personal dislike, despite his wealth and status: "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 134). Her unwavering convictions up until that point show the reader that, rather than taking the statement about a man of fortune seriously, she is merely making a playful allusion to widely accepted social norms. After seeing Pemberley, Elizabeth does eventually change her mind.

In contrast to Elizabeth's more idealistic viewpoints, Charlotte Lucas represents a practical and financially driven perspective on marriage. Charlotte sees marriage as a necessary tool for social stability and financial security, whereas Elizabeth wants a partnership built on love and respect. Her choice to wed Mr. Collins, a man she does not love, is representative of this pragmatic strategy. Charlotte admits, "I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 90). Her acceptance of marriage as a transactional arrangement is highlighted in this statement. This suggests that Austen is remarking on society in general. She does not explicitly state 'Charlotte thus demonstrated realism, as opposed to the romantic ideals of this novel' but it is implied in the phrase "most people."

Examining the legal status of women in the nineteenth century reveals that married women essentially lacked legal recognition. In legal terms, a husband and wife were considered one entity, with the wife's legal identity virtually merged into that of her husband's. She existed under his guardianship or cover, a state referred to as coverture, where her legal rights and obligations were subsumed by his. (Perkin, 2002, p. 13). Additionally, any personal assets a woman possessed before marriage, such as stocks, shares, money, jewellery, and belongings, automatically transferred to her husband's ownership, barring any arrangement that placed them in a trust specifically for her benefit. The husband held the authority to manage or distribute these assets as he saw fit, regardless of whether he and his wife lived together. (Perkin, 2002, p. 13).

Given this historical context, the emphasis in *Pride and Prejudice* on making a 'good' marriage takes on profound significance. Within the societal constraints of the law, as detailed

by Perkin (2002), a woman's choice of spouse was not merely a matter of personal happiness, but a decision impacting her legal status, financial security, and social standing. Austen underscores this reality, particularly through the character of Mrs. Bennet, whose obsessive concern with marrying off her daughters well is rooted in the understanding that their futures depend on the legal and economic protections marriage can provide. Mrs. Bennet is portrayed as a humorous figure. Though new interpretations portray Mr. Bennet as unconcerned, Austen does not portray it that way because, through Elizabeth, we are sympathetic to Mr. Bennet and find Mrs. Bennet irritating. The truth is that their future as single women would be dire. While Austen presents a fantasy reminiscent of historical romances, the reality for her female readers of the time would be a life similar to Charlotte Lucas.

The difficult situation faced by the Bennet sisters provides an example of how vulnerable women, without the benefit of substantial dowries or inheritances, must navigate the marriage market to secure their well-being. Elizabeth's eventual union with Mr. Darcy, a match that combines both affection and advantageous social positioning, exemplifies the ideal outcome in a society where a woman's security and status were inextricably linked to the man she married. Austen undermines her own criticism of that view: the single man with a fortune was indeed in want of a wife. Austen may be arguing that the system was inescapable, or she might ultimately be fairly conservative, raising questions about a system that degrades women, but ending with a celebration of that system, as all her novels conclude in marriage. Examining *Pride and Prejudice's* marriage-related legal and social restrictions provides a lens through which to look at the larger gender dynamics and power structures of the time in English society.

5.1.3 Social Class

Pride and Prejudice depicts the upper-class society of England and is divided into three sections: the aristocracy, the gentry, and the squirarchy or class of independent gentlemen who did not have to work. (Putri et al., 2017, p. 10). Though they belonged to different social classes, many of the novel's characters were members of the upper class. Social class and wealth are closely related, and wealth influences how the characters interact with one another and how society perceives them. Because of their substantial wealth, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley enjoy respect and influence in society. Conversely, the Bennet family, though possessing a modest income, are viewed with condescension by those of higher social standing. "Upon my word, Caroline, I should think it more possible to get Pemberley by purchase than by imitation." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 28). Caroline speaks to her sister Louisa

Hurst about Elizabeth, Caroline is arguing that it would be simpler to buy Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's estate, rather than trying to imitate the manners and social standing of the Bennet family. By suggesting that Elizabeth and her family's social status is so much lower than Pemberley and Mr. Darcy's that they are unable to rise above it through imitation, Caroline is being snarky and patronising towards Elizabeth and her family because of their low social standing. Austen scrutinises, through wit, the complexities of wealth and class, underlining how wealth can grant privilege while simultaneously exposing the limitations and prejudices entrenched within the social hierarchy.

Exploring social class in *Pride and Prejudice* provides a critical literacy lens, through which one can examine Regency England's landed gentry and the impact of societal hierarchies. In her discussion of the complexity of class differences, Austen demonstrates how her characters' relationships, perceptions, and opportunities are impacted. England in the 1800s was a class-defined society with a system ingrained in all facets of life. The landed gentry and aristocracy, with their vast fortunes, sway over politics, and social standing, occupied the highest positions. Below them resided the middle class, comprised of professionals, entrepreneurs, and clergy members, striving for respectability and upward social mobility. Meanwhile, at the lower levels of society, the working class and the poor grappled with poverty, facing limited opportunities for advancement. (Bagthaliya, 2023, p. 3). Through the experiences of the Bennet family and their interactions with the higher social levels, Austen uses irony to critique the constraints on social mobility and the class prejudices prevalent in her time, offering insights into the challenges and aspirations influenced by one's social standing.

By highlighting moral failings and virtues across the spectrum of social classes, Austen's depiction of characters from different social classes both highlights and challenges the superficial assumptions based on class. Emphasising this portrayal challenges pupils to consider the legitimacy and fairness of social stratification by demonstrating that morality and character are traits that are independent of social class. Although, this has to be learnt and it is therefore important to facilitate appropriate lessons on *Pride and Prejudice*, to teach pupils these critical skills. Through the story, pupils can reflect on the true measures of worth in society, subtly advocating for a reevaluation of the criteria by which individuals are judged and valued. The characters in the novel represent various social classes of their time, each influenced by their social position in society, which in turn shapes their perspectives on marriage and romance.

Firstly, the Bennet family, belonging to the lower gentry of the gentlemen class due to Mr. Bennet's modest landowning status, emphasises the importance of advantageous marriages for securing their financial future. Mrs. Bennet's relentless pursuit of suitable suitors for her daughters underscores their aspirations to climb the social ladder. Furthermore, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley epitomise a highly wealthy class, highly sought-after due to their riches and status, underlining the allure of noble lineage in marriage. The difference in class is made clear within the novel. The Bingleys are not landed gentry, as evidenced by the statement made at one point that his father "intended to purchase an estate but had not lived to do it" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 12). It should be noted that the Bingleys appear to be of "new money," or at least to have made more money through business investments. Elizabeth correctly asserts that she is a gentleman's daughter marrying a gentleman. Furthermore, Mrs. Bennet married up, as she is the daughter of a tradesman. All points remarking the difference between the status they possess. Moreover, Mr. Collins, is a well-respected a clergyman, set to inherit Longbourn. Lady Catherine de Bourgh stands as the epitome of aristocratic nobility, showcasing the vast differences in social standing and the barriers imposed by class. Lastly, the Gardiners symbolise upper middle-class respectability, characterised by financial security and education (a profession within the law), serving as a contrast to the Bennets' lower gentry status. (Bagthaliya, 2023, pp. 3-4).

An analysis of social class in *Pride and Prejudice* reveals that it is depicted in the novel through three main elements: power, wealth, and status. (Putri et al., 2017, p. 9). The interplay of power, wealth, and social status shape the narrative. Power and money are connected throughout the novel, through the difference between the economic privilege of women and men. (Putri et al., 2017, p. 10). An example of power is shown through Mr. Darcy: "and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men." (Austen, 1813/2916, p. 9). His refusal to dance with Elizabeth due to her social standing, exemplifies the influence of class and personal power in interactions. Furthermore, another instance from the novel that exemplifies power dynamics involves Lady Catherine de Bourgh. She attempts to assert her authority over Elizabeth by demanding she not marry Mr. Darcy. This confrontation showcases the use of social position to exert influence and control, reflecting the power relationships that Austen addresses.

Social class was often tied to wealth and particularly as Mrs. Bennet eagerly discusses the financial circumstances of eligible bachelors. When Mrs. Bennet mentions Mr. Bingley's annual income of 5000 pounds, her excitement underscores the significant social status

attached to such wealth. This amount places Mr. Bingley comfortably within the upper echelons of society, making him an ideal match for one of her daughters. However, when she later learns of Mr. Darcy's income of 10,000 pounds per year, Mrs. Bennet's admiration escalates even further, underscoring the immense influence that wealth wields in determining social class and desirability as a marriage partner. Furthermore, social class is a distinguishing characteristic that influences the interactions and perspectives of the characters.

The characters, who each represent a different aspect of that society, embody the conflicts that arise between individual aspirations and socially suitable expectations. Austen reveals the hypocrisies of a society that frequently prioritises material wealth and superficiality over true feelings and desires. "but how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 212). Taken in the context of the novel, this implies that marriages based only on passion or infatuation, without a strong moral foundation or a deeper level of connection, are unlikely to find lasting joy in their marriage. It emphasises the risks of getting married for superficial reasons, such as wealth or physical attraction, without considering the more fundamental characteristics that constitute a solid and long-lasting partnership. Through her use of irony and commentary, Austen unveils the complexities of a culture where class frequently suppresses individual passions and authenticity. (Bagthaliya, 2023, p. 7).

Using *Pride and Prejudice* in the classroom provides a valuable opportunity to explore the theme of social class with pupils. By close reading, role-playing the characters or analysing the interactions and behaviours of characters from various social standings, pupils can gain insight into the complexities of class distinctions and their impact on that society.

Additionally, exploring how social class influences characters' decisions and relationships allows pupils to draw parallels to contemporary issues of inequality and discrimination. By engaging with the novel through a critical literacy, pupils develop a deeper understanding of social class and its implications. It helps them develop empathy for people whose lives are more difficult because of their social position or lack of wealth by making them aware of how social forces outside of our control create different opportunities and expectations.

5.1.4 Pride and Prejudice

The story's central motifs, pride, and prejudice, influence the characters' behaviours, viewpoints, and relationships. The working title of the book, "First Impressions," alludes to a central theme that explores the significance of first impressions and their potential for deception. This title emphasises the idea that the characters often make snap decisions based on perceptions that may not accurately reflect their true nature. When we read with this title in mind, we become more conscious of how characters like Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth initially perceive one another. Austen illustrates the transforming potential of self-reflection and personal development while also examining the damaging effects of unbridled pride and preconceived notions through the interactions between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. The theme of pride manifests in the characters' excessive self-regard and attitudes, leading to misunderstandings, conflict, and obstacles to genuine connection. Conversely, prejudice arises from preconceived notions; first impressions, and societal biases, hindering individuals from seeing others for who they truly are. As the story progresses, it becomes clear how prejudice and pride can both impede and help people on their journey towards self-awareness, love, and understanding.

Both prejudice and pride have positive connotations as well: prejudice is used to imply (good) judgement, and pride is associated with one's own self-worth. Pride is depicted as a double-edged sword, both a source of strength and a destructive force. Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh exhibit pride in their high social status and noble lineage, leading them to look down upon those they deem beneath them. Darcy's initial distant and arrogant demeanour, stemming from his pride in his wealth and social standing, creates obstacles in his relationship with Elizabeth. However, as the story progresses, Darcy's pride is challenged and he changes, realising his faults and learning humility. On the other hand, Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet display a comical and exaggerated form of pride, which blinds them to their ridiculousness. Austen uses this form of pride to illustrate its potential to blind individuals to their faults, hinder meaningful connections, and create barriers to personal growth.

Mr. Darcy's arrogance and pride early in the novel are evident when Elizabeth declares, "I could easily forgive *his* pride if he had not mortified *mine*" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 15). This passage highlights Mr. Darcy's early contempt for people who he believes to be beneath him and illustrates the damaging effects of unchecked pride. Elizabeth's mother is not gentleman born, and therefore beneath him in status, Mr. Darcy's pride leads him to make snap judgements about Elizabeth and her family, creating a rift between them.

In this quote, Elizabeth is holding her own pride up as something worthwhile, not a fault. It is a synonym for self-respect and self-worth. Mr. Darcy's pride is projected outwards, however, and is a synonym for snobbery. But as the narrative progresses, Mr. Darcy's character arc makes clear the transformational potential of humility and self-awareness. Austen utilises Mr. Darcy to highlight the risks of excessive pride and the necessity of accepting personal shortcomings in order to grow as a person. Through this transformation, Mr. Darcy realises that he has placed too much weight on social factors and insufficient weight on his own judgement. A balance between them is required.

Another instance of Mr. Darcy's pride is evident in his first proposal to Elizabeth, where he initially focuses on his social status and superiority rather than expressing genuine feelings of love. In his proposal, Darcy states, "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 131). This passage demonstrates more of Mr. Darcy's self-confidence and his assumption that Elizabeth should be flattered by his advances. Mr. Darcy's initial proposal is characterised by conceit and haughtiness since he fails to consider Elizabeth's feelings or viewpoint into account. This moment in the novel underlines the destructive effects of pride on relationships, as Darcy's prideful approach only serves to alienate Elizabeth and highlight the disconnect between them. It is only through subsequent reflection and personal growth that Darcy overcome his pride and earn Elizabeth's love.

Moreover, the theme of pride extends beyond individual characters to the societal norms and expectations of this period of English society. The social hierarchy and emphasis on class distinctions contribute to the prevalence of pride among characters from different social classes within the novel. Lady Catherine de Bourgh embodies the arrogance and entitlement that can result from inherited wealth and high social status. Lady Catherine's condescending attitude towards Elizabeth reflects her belief in her superiority based on her noble status. Similarly, Mr. Collins's obsequious behaviour towards those he perceives as higher in rank demonstrates the subservience born out of pride in one's connections and ironically, he does not have enough pride, as in self-respect, to behave in a less obsequious way. Austen uses these characters to critique the superficiality and artificiality of a society determined by pride and class consciousness, which we can transfer into the classroom through a critique that will increase pupils' awareness of how social commentary need not be overt when discussed in the classroom. It can be subtle, veiled in rules of politeness or observations of social conventions.

Austen uses language and narrative techniques; she uses free indirect discourse to say more than would be allowed to be expressed aloud. For example, Elizabeth's view of the Bingley sisters: "Elizabeth listened in silence but was not convinced: their behaviour at the assembly had not been calculated to please in general; and with more quickness of observation and less pliancy of temper than her sister, and with a judgement too unassailed by any attention to herself, she was very little disposed to approve them." (Austen, 1813/2016, pp. 11-12). The reader learns more about Elizabeth and her opinions through free indirect discourse. By using this, the reader is exposed to the characters real actions and can therefore, interpret what is happening between the lines.

Austen also uses rhetorical techniques, and they have more functions than just interesting readers in a fictional world. Using irony involves the reader in the fictional world, where the ability to make judgments is vital. The underlying motif in the novel is the disparity between appearance and reality. Readers must come to understand that things are not always as they seem, just as Elizabeth does. Readers are prompted to sort through, consider, and assess what they see in the made-up world by Austen's methods. (Boles, 1980, pp. 5-6). Austen is able to shape the reader's reactions through characterisation. She emphasises behaviour and minimises appearance to help readers realise that character matters more than appearance. Her realistic, as opposed to ideal, main characters are important. Readers are drawn to these characters because they embody the complex mix of virtues and vices that they encounter in real-life people. Readers' reactions to characters are shaped by the presentation of their speech. (Boles, 1980, p. 130).

Furthermore, pupils can gain an understanding of the value of empathy, humility, and the capacity to question one's own assumptions through the self-reflection of these characters. They can pick up on this by critically and close reading. Talks in the classroom might centre on the idea that words frequently fail to convey what is meant to be said or how someone's position in society may shape their life or opinions in a way that calls for sympathy rather than condemnation. One thought-provoking exercise to foster this kind of understanding would be to argue whether Charlotte Lucas's marriage to Mr. Collins should be criticised. This could be used in conjunction with Charlotte's assertion that she is happier than "most" women at this time because of her comfortable home and her husband's "good character." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 90).

Charlotte is likely alluding to the difficult circumstances that many women at the time faced when she says that her comfortable home and good character husband make her happier than most women. Successful marriages were frequently viewed as the key to social standing and security. It is possible that “most” women at the time dealt with far worse situations. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour were not unusual. Upper-class men frequently visited brothels, had extramarital affairs, and overindulged in alcohol. In some cases, they even physically abused their wives. (Foyster, 2005, p. 36). Marrying such men could put women in uncomfortable, even dangerous, situations for which they have little legal recourse. By illustrating Charlotte’s situation, this enables them to comprehend that decisions that would be viewed as “bad” in their own society might actually be the best options in another. Additionally, discussions about pride can extend beyond the novel, into contemporary issues.

Pride and Prejudice provides a gateway into exploring contemporary issues related to pride, such as social media culture, where self-image and status often take precedence over genuine connections. By engaging with this theme, pupils can develop critical literacy skills, empathy, and a deeper understanding of how pride influences our perceptions, actions, and relationships. This is ultimately what this thesis aims to demonstrate; how *Pride and Prejudice* can be effectively taught through the lens of critical literacy. Pride also encourages pupils to reflect on their own experiences with pride and consider how they can navigate this in their own lives. In addition to this, prejudice in *Pride and Prejudice* underlines the dangers of preconceived judgments and the impact they have on people’s decisions and on society. This relates particularly to the LK20 objective of intercultural competence. Understanding other cultures enables pupils to comprehend the reasons behind why individuals in those cultures may behave or hold values that differ from their own.

Characters display prejudice in a variety of ways throughout the story, whether it be due to social class, reputation, or appearance. The characters’ perceptions and behaviours are heavily influenced by prejudice, which frequently results in miscommunication and conflict.

Elizabeth’s early prejudice against Mr. Darcy, which she bases on rumours and her own presumptions about his personality, is one instance of this. Her pride in her ability to make judgement calls and the unfavourable stories she hears of Mr. Darcy contribute to Elizabeth’s prejudice against him, leading her to write him off as conceited. Similar prejudices and displays of entitlement and superiority are shown by Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh towards people they perceive to be beneath their social status.

One example of prejudice in the novel is when Caroline Bingley expresses her disdain for the Bennet family's lack of social status, stating, "Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the -shire Militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to *your* family." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 183). Caroline's remark reveals her prejudice against those she perceives as inferior in social standing. The remark also suggests that she considers the militia to be beneath her notice or unworthy of mention by intentionally leaving out the name of the regiment ("-shire Militia"). This implies a sense of superiority on her part, insinuating that the militia's absence is inconsequential to her and her circle. Moreover, her emphasis on "*your* family" in capital letters is meant to highlight what she sees as the lower status of the Bennet family. She implies that the removal of the militia, which had provided social opportunities and interest in the community, would be a significant loss to the Bennets, who she perceives as relying on such events for entertainment and potential connections.

It is noteworthy, however, that Caroline Bingley is not a member of the landed gentry, which contributes to this aspect of her misjudgements and prejudice. Early on, readers learn that the Bingley sisters have some claim to status due to their attractiveness, wealth, connections, and education, but they forget their father acquired his wealth through trade (i.e., they are *nouveau riche*). In the hierarchy of classes, the Bennet sisters are her superiors. Moreover, Elizabeth's initial prejudice towards Mr. Darcy is central to the story, shaping the dynamics of their relationship throughout the novel. When she first meets Mr. Darcy at the Meryton assembly, she overhears him making demeaning remarks about her, leading her to form a negative opinion of him. Additionally, she is influenced by the unfavourable accounts of Mr. Darcy's behaviour of Mr. Wickham, as told by Mr. Wickham himself, further solidifying her prejudice. This is informing the reader that it is important to gather a wider account of someone if we are to fairly judge them.

Elizabeth's pride in her own perceptions blinds her to Darcy's true nature, and she dismisses him as arrogant and proud without truly knowing him. An example of this is a description of Mr. Darcy's from the Meryton Ball: "His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 8). This early established prejudice causes Elizabeth to misinterpret Mr. Darcy's actions and intentions later on, leading to misunderstandings between them. She assumes that Mr. Darcy sees her merely as a woman seeking attention from a man of status and wealth. This demonstrates how Elizabeth's preconceived notions influence her interpretation of Mr. Darcy's behaviour and underlines the reciprocal nature of prejudice in

the novel. These misunderstandings are also caused by other factors. Elizabeth is abiding to societal standards in every conversation. Mr. Darcy's initial impression of Elizabeth was that she was in fact a woman in want of a wealthy husband. Mr. Darcy might have felt this way because of social customs, which prohibit people from speaking freely due to social codes and severely restricted women's roles in that society. The pair is therefore unable to express their honest opinions, because of the rules of politeness, making the misunderstandings even greater.

Prejudice is a useful teaching subject because it allows pupils to investigate societal norms and the consequences of making assumptions about others. This is directly tied to LK20 and how pupils must understand that they are constructs of their society. "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." (Udir, 2019, p. 2). The novel raises awareness of the ways in which prejudices impact people's interactions and perceptions. By analysing the characters' prejudiced attitudes towards one another, such as Darcy's initial contempt for the Bennet family's social standing and Elizabeth's misperceptions of Darcy, teachers can investigate the detrimental effects of prejudice on relationships between people. In addition, the novel offers a historical framework for talking about and considering how society norms affect how other people are perceived. Through this theme exploration and application of critical literacy, pupils may gain an increased awareness of the significance of seeing past first impressions and rumours in order to gain an authentic understanding of others. They will accomplish this by examining indirect or ironic remarks, as well as discrepancies between appearance and reality. Pupils need to be able to read between the lines and understand how society shapes cultural products like novels, and this is critical literacy.

This topic also provides opportunities to explore current issues of prejudice, bias, and discrimination, making it an important and valuable theme for classroom discussions and learning. This is crucial because within the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship, as discussed in chapter 4, particularly in the foreign languages subject, there is an emphasis on developing pupils' capacity for critical thinking and their ability to navigate differences of opinion with respect. "This can open for additional ways of interpreting the world, help cultivate curiosity and engagement and prevent prejudice." (Udir, 2019).

The relevance and central values section of the English subject plan additionally establishes prevention of prejudice a priority. Because of this, *Pride and Prejudice* makes an excellent teaching tool. Along with examining the detrimental effects of prejudice, the novel gives pupils an angle through which they can critically assess their own preconceptions and biases. By examining the prejudiced attitudes of the characters and their subsequent conflicts, pupils can acquire a better comprehension of how prejudice manifests and its impact on both individuals and society. This approach is consistent with the curriculum's emphasis on developing empathy, critical thinking, and respect for different opinions.

5.2 *Pride and Prejudice* through LK20 Core Values

The following section will examine the relationship between *Pride and Prejudice* and the four core values discussed in Chapter 4. It will investigate how the themes of this novel intersect with these values, providing important insights into the novel's value in relation to LK20.

5.2.1 Human Dignity

Pride and Prejudice serves as an exemplary novel for teaching pupils about human dignity within the LK20 framework. The novel examines issues that scrutinise societal treatment based on social status and appearance, providing a reflection on the value of different people within landed gentry society. Mr. Darcy's transformation throughout the novel is an example of the exploration of human dignity. Initially perceived as detached and proud, he learns to set aside his prejudices and recognise the worth of others, especially Elizabeth. His realisation that social status does not define a person's value underlines this exploration of human dignity. When he proposes to Elizabeth for the first time, his words are tainted with pride. However, through a self-reflection, he comes to understand the importance of empathy and genuine respect for others' dignity. This is demonstrated in an interaction between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth: "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 250). In this quote, Mr. Darcy humbly expresses his love for Elizabeth and his willingness to accept her decision, regardless of whether she returns his feelings. It demonstrates his growth from a proud and reserved man to someone who respects Elizabeth's autonomy.

Likewise, Elizabeth's story offers relevance for human dignity. Despite facing societal pressures and misunderstandings, Elizabeth maintains her integrity and refuses to compromise her values. When confronted with Mr. Collins's proposal, she asserts her right to make

independent choices, demonstrating her commitment to personal dignity. Elizabeth's refusal to marry for convenience or social advancement underlines the novel's emphasis on individuality and the importance of upholding one's dignity, even through the societal expectations. This statement from Elizabeth reflects her commitment to her values and personal dignity: "I am only resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to *you*, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me." (Austen, 2016, p. 245). This is Elizabeth's response to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who attempts to intimidate her into rejecting Mr. Darcy's proposal. Elizabeth asserts her independence and refuses to be swayed by Lady Catherine's efforts to control her decisions. She declares her right to pursue her own happiness and make decisions based on her own judgment. This moment exemplifies Elizabeth's strength of character and her refusal to compromise her values for the sake of societal expectations or the opinions of others above her in class.

Furthermore, an examination of class distinctions and the impact of social norms on people's lives provides much material for discussions on human dignity. The Bennet family, Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Wickham all navigate the constraints of their social status, revealing the prejudices prevalent in their society. Through these characters' experiences, pupils can explore the complexities of human dignity in different social contexts and the challenges individuals face in asserting their worth. *Pride and Prejudice* has much to offer pupils through characters and themes that align closely with LK20's focus on human dignity. By analysing the interactions and transformations of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, pupils can learn more about empathy and respect, or lack thereof. The novel's exploration of societal norms, class dynamics, and personal growth provides relevant topics for learning about human dignity, making it a valuable resource for teachers aiming to instill these essential values in their pupils.

5.2.2 Identity and Cultural Diversity

Pride and Prejudice further provides material for exploring the Identity and Cultural Diversity component of the LK20 curriculum. The focus of social class and individual identity, and the exploration of Regency England gives insight into cultural differences and the complexities of forming one's identity. By exposing pupils to works of literature where identity is central to the story, such as in *Pride and Prejudice*, pupils might broaden their understanding of diverse cultural expressions and traditions. Identity is central in *Pride and Prejudice* because the

characters are defined by their gender, marital status, and social position. Their sense of self and worth is completely external and defined by social categories.

The novel explores the social constraints and expectations faced by its characters, particularly regarding social class and gender roles. An example of this is Elizabeth's struggle against the rigid societal norms of her time, as well as her determination to assert her independence and integrity. As mentioned in chapter 5.2.1, when Elizabeth rejects Mr. Collins's proposal, she asserts her right to make independent choices and remain true to her values. It is worth noting though that the limit of her social power is her right of refusal. A woman cannot shape her own destiny beyond that, so her independence is limited.

Pride and Prejudice can also be used for discussing how personal identity has evolved over time. Through exploring the choices made by the characters, we can draw parallels to the options available to pupils in today's society. This includes reflecting on the ability we now have to choose our own paths and make decisions based on personal values and aspirations. In the context of the novel, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy navigate the constraints of their social environment and societal expectations, providing perspective into how this shapes their own identity. Furthermore, the novel enables initiation of a broader discussion on identity in contemporary society. We can explore the concept of identity within LK20. "Insight into our history and culture is important for developing the identities of pupils and their belonging in society." (Udir, 2019, p. 5). Furthermore, the teaching of identity is also related to language identity as stated in the curriculum: "teaching and training shall ensure that the pupils are confident in their language proficiency, that they develop their language identity." (Udir, 2019, p. 6). This discussion extends to how societal norms and expectations impact identity now, and whether these influences have evolved for better or worse. Additionally, *Pride and Prejudice* serves as a beneficial way to draw parallels between the societal conventions depicted in the novel and the influence of social media on identity today. Through these comparisons, we can examine how societal structures have changed, or remained, and the ways in which social media now plays a role in shaping current identities.

By taking this critically literate approach to *Pride and Prejudice*, pupils are exposed to the ways that language and social norms form personal experience. This challenges pupils to approach meaning-making in a way that they might not if the language felt more familiar to their own society. By encountering unfamiliar language and cultural contexts, pupils are prompted to develop critical reading skills that are essential for deciphering and interpreting

the text. In this way, *Pride and Prejudice* awakens critical reading skills in pupils that may not be as easily stimulated by more familiar language use, again influenced by cultural differences. Using *Pride and Prejudice* in the classroom encourages pupils to reflect on their own identities and cultural heritage. By examining the characters' struggles, pupils can investigate parallels between their experiences and those of the novel. This fosters empathy and self-reflection, enabling pupils to explore how societal expectations and prejudices may influence their own sense of identity. By promoting an inclusive and diverse environment in the classroom, teachers have the chance to facilitate discussions on personal identity, cultural heritage, and the importance of embracing differences, which is mentioned as an important component of the core curriculum. (Udir, 2019, p. 5).

5.2.3 Critical Thinking and Ethical Awareness

The theme of pride and prejudice itself invites critical examination. Mr. Darcy's initial pride and Elizabeth's prejudice against him form the central conflict of the novel. As pupils read about these characters' interactions, they are encouraged to question the validity of their judgments and consider how societal expectations influence their perceptions. The novel challenges pupils to think critically about the consequences of pride and prejudice, prompting discussions on the importance of empathy, self-awareness, and the dangers of presumptions. Additionally, *Pride and Prejudice* provides opportunities for ethical exploration. The societal pressures faced by its characters, particularly regarding marriage and social status, can make pupils consider the ethical implications of their choices. For example, when Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, she faces an ethical dilemma: should she prioritise her own happiness and values or succumb to societal pressure to secure a financially advantageous marriage. By discussing Elizabeth's refusal and her commitment to personal integrity, pupils can discuss the importance of ethical decision-making and the courage to stand by one's convictions.

The curriculum underlines the importance of helping pupils develop their ability to make ethical assessments and raise their awareness of ethical issues, to foster a sense of moral responsibility towards themselves and others. (Udir, 2019, p. 7). The character of Mr. Wickham presents a complex ethical case. His charming demeanour masks his deceitful nature, leading to disastrous consequences for Lydia Bennet. By exploring this plotline in the classroom, pupils can discuss trust, deception, and the responsibilities people have towards each other in society. By critically examining Mr. Wickham's actions and their impact, pupils may learn about the complexities of ethical behaviour and the consequences of moral failings.

This can lead to further discussions about concepts of right and wrong, as well as ethical dilemmas present in modern society.

Furthermore, an exploration of social class and the expectations placed on individuals based on their status provides a means for ethical analysis. Mr. Wickham's lower social standing, his father working for Mr. Darcy's father suggests he is not a gentleman, and this presents challenges and limitations. Mr. Wickham represents anxiety about the social position of army officers, exploring this can urge pupils to consider the ethical dimensions of societal inequality and the impact on individual opportunities. Through Elizabeth, who challenges these societal norms, pupils can question the fairness of class distinctions and the ethical responsibilities of those in positions of privilege. Elizabeth, despite her lower social status within the landed gentry, gives insight into a world of a higher social classes. However, it is important to note that the novel does not depict all social classes, particularly the lower class. Nevertheless, an exploration of the society portrayed in the novel can prompt discussions about societal hierarchies and dynamics. Contemporary societies have systems of classification based on aspects such as wealth, connections, fame, and this could be explored as well.

Pride and Prejudice has much to offer through themes that align closely with the critical thinking and ethical awareness objectives of the LK20 curriculum. Through the novel's exploration of pride, prejudice, societal expectations, and moral dilemmas, pupils can engage in critical reflection and ethical inquiry. By analysing the characters' choices and the consequences of their actions, pupils develop the skills to question assumptions, evaluate evidence, and make informed ethical judgments, and by doing so does meet the requirements of critical literacy.

5.2.4 Democracy and Participation

Pride and Prejudice provides useful knowledge into the principles of democracy and participation, aligning with the objectives of the LK20 curriculum. The novel, set in Regency-England, provides an angle that pupils can explore the limitations faced by individuals in a society where certain groups, such as women, had limited rights and participation in democratic processes. The pupils are encouraged to consider the importance of democratic values such as equality, freedom of speech, and inclusion as they explore the themes of social hierarchy and gender roles. One example from the novel that highlights the theme of limited democratic participation is the portrayal of women's rights and roles in society. In the world

of *Pride and Prejudice*, women such as the Bennet sisters had little control over their futures, particularly in matters of inheritance and marriage. The predicament of the Bennet family, where the lack of a male heir puts their estate at risk of passing to a distant relative, illustrates the unequal treatment of women in property rights. Through discussions on this topic, pupils can explore the historical context of women's rights and the challenges they faced in a society dominated by men.

Furthermore, the novel challenges societal norms and prejudices that perpetuate inequality and limit democratic participation. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy serve as advocates for equality and fairness, each in their own way. Elizabeth, with her independent spirit and refusal to conform to societal expectations, challenges the gender roles of her time. Mr. Darcy, despite his initial pride and prejudice, learns to see beyond social status and recognises the inherent worth of others, despite their status. By examining their character development, pupils can learn about the importance of questioning prejudice and advocating for the rights of all individuals, regardless of their background. Discussing the entailment of Mr. Bennet's estate prompts an exploration about the lack of fairness and equality in their society, which often denied women the opportunity to inherit property and secure their futures. It shows the undemocratic nature of inheritance laws at the time, where women's rights were often disregarded in favour of male heirs. Pupils can explore how this aspect of the novel reflects broader societal injustices and the limitations placed on women's worth and economic independence. Through this example, *Pride and Prejudice* can be used to facilitate discussions about the intersection of gender, inheritance, and democracy, prompting critical reflections on the inequalities inherent in the legal and social systems.

Moreover, the novel's exploration of class distinctions and the treatment of individuals based on their social class provides a platform for discussions on minority rights and equality. The English soldiers in the story face societal biases despite their service to the country, underlining the struggles of marginalised groups. The officers are frequently the subject of rumours and suspicion because of their fleeting and undefined social standing. One example is Lydia Bennet's eager involvement with militia activities after she develops an infatuation with the officers. Her actions and her relationships with the officers, particularly Mr. Wickham, cause scandalous rumours to spread throughout the neighbourhood. These rumours reflect the prejudice in society towards soldiers, especially militia members, who are viewed as less respectable or reliable than men from higher social classes, which ultimately puts Lydia at risk. We can expand on this topic by connecting it to marginalised groups in our

current society, both in Norway and around the world, and connecting these worlds by examining the similarities and differences in what they go through.

By integrating discussions of *Pride and Prejudice* in class, pupils engage in critical analysis of societal structures and values, meeting the core value of democracy and participation. They are encouraged to reflect on the importance of protecting minority rights, promoting inclusivity, and challenging discriminatory practices. Through the characters experience in the novel, pupils can understand more of the complexities of democratic principles and the ongoing struggle for equality and participation in society. As a result, *Pride and Prejudice*, becomes a resource for teaching pupils about democracy and participation while also instilling empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of responsibility for creating a more just and inclusive society.

6. The implementation of *Pride and Prejudice* in the Norwegian L2 Classroom

This chapter explores what pupils gain from reading *Pride and Prejudice* with an emphasis on critical literacy. Chapter 5 presented key themes in the novel: Women's Position in Society, The Importance of Marriage, Social Class, and Pride and Prejudice. Building on the literary analysis, this chapter explores how to engage with them through critical literacy in the classroom, demonstrating how critical readings of *Pride and Prejudice* can help pupils learn and understand more about these topics. Theory of critical literacy and critical literacy pedagogy was presented in Chapter 2 and 2.1 and the concept is based on several core principles that focus on the examination of language and its inherent influence. Given the emphasis on upper secondary Vg1 general/vocational studies, the discussion will primarily centre with this level of education in mind.

6.1 Teaching *Pride and Prejudice*

As previously mentioned, the LK20 curriculum offers a wide range for interpretation regarding the literature to be taught. It does not mandate that the material must be in the form of a book; it can be presented through any medium, and there are no specific requirements regarding content. Despite this flexibility, *Pride and Prejudice* holds particular potency within this framework. While many other literary works can be utilised to achieve competence within the core curriculum elements, and critical literacy can be applied to numerous texts, I argue that *Pride and Prejudice* is specifically relevant to the Norwegian L2 classroom. When learning English or examining the specifics of the language, understanding its history and evolution is essential. Teaching this novel allows us to establish a direct connection to the historical contexts of English, providing pupils with a deeper appreciation of the language's development and uncovering meaning that they might not previously have recognised.

Despite being written over 200 years ago; *Pride and Prejudice* has maintained its scholarly relevance and cultural significance through the centuries. Its lasting popularity and continued resonance with readers around the world are evident in its frequent adaptations and references in modern pop culture. From film and television adaptations, BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Wright's film version of *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), *Lost in Austen* (2008), *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), towards looser adaptations such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) or the novel *Longbourn* (2013) demonstrates the novel's continued cultural significance.

Moreover, there has been a notable resurgence in the popularity of period dramas in recent years, with series such as *Bridgerton* (2020-) and the spin off *Queen Charlotte: a Bridgerton story* (2023-) providing a re-imagining of the historical reality in a postmodern way, offering a new angle on the costume drama that differentiates it from earlier versions like the BBC. The Netflix series, *Bridgerton* in particular, gained popularity with its modern take on a Regency-period romance, complete with elaborate sets, costumes, and diverse casting. *Bridgerton*, not only became a cultural phenomenon, but also sparked a renewed interest in historical settings and themes. Following its success, we have seen the emergence of similar period dramas, such as *Sanditon* (2019-2023) and *The Gilded Age* (2022-).

This resurgence has not only impacted pop culture but how viewers interact with historical narratives, inviting people to engage themselves in the opulence and drama of the past. In current times, where period dramas set in historical times are enjoying a renaissance in popularity and generating widespread discussion, teaching *Pride and Prejudice* becomes more significant than ever. While these shows offer creative interpretations of history, it is equally important for pupils to learn about historical accuracy and distinguish between fact and fiction. *Pride and Prejudice* is an ideal source for this. The pupils are introduced to a fictional narrative, based on the realities of Austen living them, providing a glimpse into the Regency period and allowing pupils to explore the society, values, and traditions of the time, as they were.

This thesis has previously discussed the use of fiction to teach history, and research suggest that it is highly beneficial. Additionally, it is emphasised that teaching history in a way that immerses pupils can be beneficial. (Dodd, 1999; Schur, 2007; Crawford & Zygouris-Coe 2008). By being introduced to characters and their setting, pupils are invited to explore a story, thereby immersing themselves in the story. By including quality literature, particularly historical works of fiction, into the learning experience has been identified as an effective strategy for improving pupil participation and engagement (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2008, p. 3). Because *Pride and Prejudice* successfully blends historical facts with a fictional story, it is therefore a suitable choice for teaching historical contexts. Furthermore, as previously stated, Hoff (2013) argues for fiction as a constructed nature, which is what we need to build pupils' consciousness of if we are to make them critically literate. This allows pupils to confront any prejudices and entrenched opinions about societies other than their own, as they explore literary texts on a more personal level. This is that "communicative experience" that

Hoff sees as vital. The pupils are able to gain a fuller comprehension of foreign cultures, but also gain insight into themselves (p. 31).

By teaching *Pride and Prejudice*, many pupils have a known starting point, as many might be familiar with the widely popular shows or even the adaptations of the novel, meaning we have the starting interest point for creating engagement, the importance of which Crawford & Zygoris-Coe (2008) underscore. Furthermore, *Pride and Prejudice* is a high-quality work of fiction with historical elements through which pupils can learn more about Regency England and its society. As they engage with the novel, pupils may initially rely on their presumptions and illusions of this period through their exposure to modern costume drama. However, teaching the novel also presents challenges to these perceptions, where pupils can question and reconsider their understanding of Regency society. Through this process, pupils learn more about the historical context of the novel and develop insights into the complexities of class distinctions and the characters within such a setting. Therefore, teaching *Pride and Prejudice* is an opportunity for pupils to explore history and to critically examine their own perspectives and assumptions about this period.

6.2 Critical Literacy through Themes

The pedagogical aim of teaching *Pride and Prejudice* is to provoke positive and strong reactions from pupils. (Hansson, 2011, p. 8). Literature should encourage pupils to read, understand, interpret, and evaluate texts creatively, whether contemporary or historical (Ross, 2013, p. 300). Collie and Slater (2012) recommend making texts more accessible to pupils who may not be accustomed to extensive reading. In this context, teachers are advised to steer clear of overwhelming details in the learning process and instead concentrate on broader themes (p. 14). Hence, this thesis present strategies for teaching *Pride and Prejudice* by focusing on its thematic elements and offering inclusive approaches suitable for varying difficulty levels. Understanding themes is a process influenced by readers' prior experiences, necessitating the exploration of multiple themes rather than a singular one (Au, 1992; Morgan et al., 2021, p. 430). Themes must be rooted in textual evidence, yet the evidence readers connect with and find significant may vary. Discussion, therefore, plays an important factor in guiding pupils in theme construction.

Research has shown that posing specific questions supports pupils' understanding of themes (Au, 1992; Lehr, 1988; Williams et al., 2002; Morgan et al., 2021). Furthermore, Au (1992) observed that discussion enhanced pupils' theme construction abilities, especially when they

were given repeated opportunities. Teachers can facilitate pupils in developing and expanding on each other's ideas, fostering collaboration that supports the construction of multiple themes. (Morgan et al., 2021, p. 430). Answers to questions about themes are frequently fragments or the essence of ideas rather than fully formed statements that are expanded upon through continued inquiry and discussion.

Books frequently have several themes, and it can be advantageous to encourage pupils to investigate these different themes because they gain insight into the author's intentions and are able to relate the themes to their own experiences, or lack thereof. Educating pupils about a book's various themes may help in their comprehension of the story as a whole. With this approach, pupils can understand how various components come together to form the core of the story. Even though some pupils might identify more with particular themes than others, it is essential that they investigate stories and examples that differ from their own reality, because it is through these explorations that pupils develop vital critical literacy skills.

Developing an understanding of themes is a gradual process that requires pupils to observe characters' evolving experiences and revelations within a fictional text. It involves a form of translation, where readers analyse characters' experiences in the story world and apply them to real-world contexts. When looking into theme analysis, pupils must infer the meaning behind these experiences. (Morgan et al., 2021, p. 437). Teachers play a crucial role in guiding pupils through this internal thought process of understanding the themes present in the books they read. Teachers can draw attention to specific parts of texts and connect them to pupils' lives, by exploring themes. By doing so with *Pride and Prejudice*, teachers can explore social class with pupils, and make comparisons between what that entailed for a landed gentry society in Regency England, and what that entails for us today. Furthermore, the same can be employed when looking into women's position in society and the similarities and differences pupils can spot between then and now, and in different societies of today.

Ultimately, the objective of teaching themes is to give pupils the ability and the skills to identify, analyse, and understand the themes they come across when reading, and help them understand why we teach literature and what can be gained from this exposure. Employing *Pride and Prejudice* in the classroom provides plenty of possibilities for diverse lessons and perspectives. A thematic approach allows for pupils to interpret, critically analyse, and derive their own meaning from the text. Consequently, this thesis advocates for incorporating key themes, as presented in the analysis, Women's Position in Society, The Importance of

Marriage, Social Class, and *Pride and Prejudice* itself into classroom instruction to effectively meet the core curriculum values and to explore the novel by employing critical literacy.

Working with Women's Position in Society

Pride and Prejudice holds significant relevance to pupils' experiences of gender and ethics. Contemporary issues such as gender discrimination and class distinctions are prevalent in today's society, making the novel's themes highly relatable and pertinent. Moreover, comparing these themes to the societal norms of nineteenth-century England offers a valuable historical context for understanding the evolution of these concepts. (Collie & Slater, 2012, p. 93)

Pride and Prejudice can function as a connection between the societal norms of Regency England and modern-day society, particularly in its exploration of gender issues. Austen's depiction of women's roles and limitations during the Regency period provides a historical context that allows pupils to critically reflect on the progress made in gender equality. This can be linked to critical literacy, by noticing the covert ways in which Austen addresses gender norms in her society, but also how the novel never overtly challenges gendered social norms too much; as they all end with marriage. Pupils can become more aware of how gendered social norms act covertly on systems and behaviour. Through the contents of the novel, pupils can examine the gender dynamics of the time and compare them with contemporary gender issues. This is a crucial aspect of the LK20 framework, as stated in the objective clause of the Education Act, where equality is identified as one of the fundamental values on which all education in Norwegian schools must be founded (Udir, 2019, p. 3). The ironic opening statement of the novel, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 3) highlight the societal perspective that financially stable men are essentially the property of society, sought after as suitable matches for daughters. This reflects the conservatism of the society and also its narrow-mindedness. (Singhal, 2021, p. 8). In addition, it makes use of irony and hyperbole to subtly criticise the fact that the members of the gentry are defined through narrow public roles.

When Mrs. Bennet expresses joy at the arrival of Mr. Bingley, proclaiming, "A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for one of our girls!" (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 3). This further illustrates the value of daughters primarily relying on their financial prospects through marriage. This mindset reflects a disregard for the humanity and

individuality of the daughters, reducing them to objects to secure financial stability for the family through marriage. These satirical lines present a commentary on the societal expectations placed upon women and their perceived role in society and also comments on a society that forces the Bennet girls into the necessity of that situation, highlighting that women's options are limited. Examining this issue of women's place in society, in the L2 classroom may assist pupils in learning about gender norms, cultural expectations, and the objectification of women.

Classroom teachings could go beyond a thematic approach and look at how Austen uses irony, satire, and language to put forward this theme, because understanding irony in one's second language is difficult. Austen satirises her commentary with humour and irony, and the latter may be challenging for English learners to discern. Therefore, it becomes an essential element to teach and expose L2 learners to. Pupils can explore how Austen critiques these societal norms through characters such as Mrs. Bennet, who sees her daughters' worth in terms of their ability to secure wealthy husbands. Austen uses a writing style of placing female characters at the centre of her novel. (Wang & Liu, 2011, p. 1830). Austen's heroines are depicted as independent individuals, to a certain extent. They serve as narrators rather than passive objects, which effectively establishes a feminist narrative authority. (Wang & Liu, 2011, p. 1830). More significant is Austen's use of free indirect discourse. By using third-person narration to depict characters' points of view, Austen is able to convey what her characters are thinking while maintaining the socially acceptable behaviour of each character. For example, Elizabeth thinking that she did not like the Bingley's. *Pride and Prejudice* offer subtle critiques of social issues, such as women's role in society. While her stories may seem to focus on the quotidian, they reveal more of broader society.

Beyond simply discussing the theme within the context of the novel, teachers can use Austen herself as an example of a pioneering woman in literature and discuss how she faced limitations in society. Pupils may explore how Austen challenged societal norms of her time through her writing. This not only enhances pupils' understanding of language and literature but also fosters discussions on gender equality, empowerment, and the importance of breaking societal barriers. Furthermore, one can explore how the constraints faced by characters such as Elizabeth resonate with current gender inequalities and the ongoing struggle for gender equality.

Additionally, by incorporating critical literacy approaches, such as examining the novel's use of irony and satire to challenge gender norms, pupils can deepen their understanding of gender critique. An example is Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth, in which he fails to recognise her lack of interest and dismisses it as a sign of modesty. This irony draws attention to the societal convention that says women should accept any marriage proposal from men, regardless of whether they are compatible or not. Furthermore, Mr. Bennet's ironic commentary on the ridiculousness of societal expectations is provided especially in his remarks addressed to Mrs. Bennet. "If your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 23). Naturally, he does not mean this and is rather suggesting that Mrs. Bennet is ridiculous for sending Jane to Netherfield in the midst of a downpour, making her sick. With the help of these examples, teachers can lead class discussions and provide exercises that fully expose pupils to the irony in the novel. This can be accomplished by reenacting a dialogue in groups, for example a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Collins' proposal, or performing a passage, and having the pupils discuss the purpose of irony within that passage.

Through *Pride and Prejudice* pupils can draw parallels between the societal expectations faced by Elizabeth and the other women of the novel, and the gender roles and expectations present in their own lives. This comparison encourages critical thinking about gender roles and fosters discussions on the progress and challenges in achieving gender equality. Through the facilitation of these conversations, literacy-based critical thinking skills are developed.

Working with The Importance of Marriage

As *Pride and Prejudice* portrays, finding a husband was a top priority for women in the upper and middle classes of the nineteenth century. It was crucial that their prospective husbands were of equal or higher social standing. The significance of this choice extended beyond personal happiness, as it influenced a woman's identity and entire situation of living. (Krstić, 2015, p. 12). The Bennet family's circumstances underscore the pressure and necessity of advantageous marriages. Mrs. Bennet's relentless pursuit of wealthy suitors for her daughters, particularly the eldest, Jane, underscores the societal belief that a woman's value and security are tied to her marital prospects.

A major conflict in the book arises from Elizabeth's views on marriage being different from those of her mother and the wider society. Elizabeth demonstrates her preference for her own

happiness and mutual respect in a marriage by turning down Mr. Collins' proposal even though it would have provided financial security. She also demonstrates her refusal to marry for convenience or social status alone by turning down Mr. Darcy's first proposal. Likewise, Charlotte Lucas's pragmatic decision to accept Mr. Collins's proposal presents an alternative viewpoint on the significance of marriage in Austen's time. Despite not feeling any romantic feelings for Mr. Collins, Charlotte made the practical choice to wed him in order to secure financial stability and a comfortable home, which emphasises the restricted choices that women in her social class had. Austen uses Charlotte's character to illustrate the societal expectations that compel women to prioritise practical considerations over personal happiness in marriage.

Using the theme, importance of marriage, in the L2 classroom helps pupils learn about the complexities of relationships and how they relate to social norms. By comparing and analysing Elizabeth Bennet and Charlotte Lucas, pupils are able to see how societal pressures influenced women's decisions regarding marriage in the Regency period. These discussions align with core values such as critical thinking and cultural awareness, encouraging pupils to question traditional norms and understand historical contexts. Moreover, examining these themes can help pupils understand the parallels to modern society, where notions of marriage, financial stability, and personal freedom still intersect.

To understand *Pride and Prejudice*, it becomes essential to comprehend the significance of marriage. Through exploring the complexities of marriage in the novel, pupils learn more about experiences that differ from the ones they face themselves and the implications of marriage on personal choices and freedom. This fosters critical thinking and cultural awareness. The discussion of marriage and societal expectations in L2 classrooms, where pupils may come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, facilitates meaningful cross-cultural dialogue. Furthermore, examining the subtleties of marriage in literature enables pupils to recognise how social norms change over time and to critically evaluate whether or not similar situations still occur in the world today. By employing critical literacy, the door is opened to cultural discussions, adding to the learning experience for pupils, as they learn to critically assess their own expectations and values, and to understand that they are informed and shaped by their social context.

Working with Social Class

Exploring social class in *Pride and Prejudice* has several benefits in the L2 classroom, especially when viewed through an understanding of critical literacy and the core values of LK20. The novel introduces characters from various social classes, giving pupils a chance to analyse Regency England's norms and prejudices. Social class is interconnected into the overall structure of *Pride and Prejudice*, as evidenced by the characters' interactions. The Bennet's modest income and lower gentry status indicate their social standing, influencing the need for marriages to secure their financial future. The wealthy are represented by Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley, who are held in high regard due to their wealth and social status. They do, however, represent various social classes.

Several passages from the novel demonstrates the nuanced aspects of class in this society, for example Elizabeth stating that, as a daughter of a gentleman, she is Darcy's equal, since Darcy is a distinguished gentleman. Contrary, the Bingley's are of new money and does not have a gentleman title, as seen in this description. "They were of a respectable family in the north of England; a circumstance more deeply impressed on their memories than that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade." (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 12). Furthermore, the Bingley's does not own an estate until he purchases Netherfield. "Mr. Bingley inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it." (Austen, 1813/2016, p.12). This further illustrates the differences of social standing, even though both Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley have a substantial fortune, the Darcy family is well-established, while the Bingley family is of a new wealth through trade. Once Mr. Bingley buys an estate he will be landed gentry as well, although still new money, so they might be looked down on by some 'older' families. Austen also presents aspirations through Mr. Collins, the clergyman seeking social security through marriage, but already set to inherit Longbourn. Furthermore, Lady Catherine de Bourgh emphasises the class-based divisions and prejudices by representing the ingrained barriers imposed by the upper classes of society.

Beyond simply identifying social class and characters, pupils can be tasked with analysing character traits, observing how characters evolve over time, and discerning the central conflicts and resolutions within the narrative. (Morgan et al., 2021, p. 429). The larger themes mentioned in this thesis are represented through *Pride and Prejudice's* characters.

Teachers play a crucial role in guiding pupils through the complexities of character analysis and narrative comprehension. By providing clear instructions, teachers can bridge the gap between challenging tasks and pupils' achievements. For example, teachers can facilitate discussions that encourage pupils to explore further character traits and motivations, guiding them to consider how these traits contribute to character development throughout the novel. Teachers can also provide scaffolded activities that break down the main conflicts and resolutions to help pupils in recognising and analysing these narrative elements more effectively. Teachers act as the intermediary between the challenging elements of reading *Pride and Prejudice* and pupils' comprehension of narrative structure.

Additionally, by engaging in critical discourse and examining the interactions and behaviours of the characters, pupils can investigate the particulars of social class differences. By studying how characters like Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, the Bennet family, and others navigate the privileges and restrictions of their social status, pupils can gain an understanding of how social standing affect relationships and perceptions. Questions about the importance of marriage, wealth, and societal expectations in the novel prompt critical thinking about social norms. The theme of social class can be applied to initiate discussions about the varying structures of social classes in diverse societies, their historical evolution, potential contemporary parallels, and their reflections in Norwegian society.

Pupils may gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies of social class and how it affects both individuals and communities through this exploration. The pupils can examine the ways in which social class norms and prejudices influence the relationships and actions of the novel's characters, and then make comparisons to present-day Norway. This encourages critical thinking about social stratification, the distribution of resources, and access to opportunities in contemporary society. By examining the theme of social class through a comparative lens, pupils can develop a broader perspective on social issues and how they are portrayed in different cultural contexts, including those pertinent to Norwegian society.

Working with Pride and Prejudice

In an L2 classroom, where pupils are navigating their identities and preconceptions while learning a new language that provides access to other cultures, the themes of pride and prejudice are particularly relatable. It also aligns well with core curriculum values, human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, and democracy and participation. In an L2 classroom, pupils are often navigating their own identities, beliefs,

and biases while learning a new language and culture. The theme of pride, exemplified by Mr. Darcy, gives pupils the possibility to discuss how this and arrogance can hinder personal growth and relationships. Furthermore, Elizabeth's takes pride in herself, as she will not allow Mr. Darcy to treat her as inferior, and this illustrates the fact that pride functions as both a negative aspect but has subtle positive meaning as well. Similarly, the theme of prejudice, embodied in Elizabeth's initial judgment of Mr. Darcy, allows for exploration of how stereotypes and biases can impact our perceptions of others. By including these themes in a teaching session of *Pride and Prejudice*, pupils learn more about empathy and cultural understanding.

By exploring side characters, pupils are exposed to situations regarding empathy. For example, the function of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, along with other minor characters, is crucial in *Pride and Prejudice* as they alert readers to the moral issues within the story. While much of the storyline is seen from Elizabeth's perspective, the narrator's commentary can at times cast doubt on her judgments. An example of this is the fact that Elizabeth's opinions on the Bingley sister are initially presented as personal views but later portrayed as authoritative, hinting at her astuteness. (Zimmerman, 1968, p. 67). The narrator's ironic commentary also adds complexity, particularly on how Mr. Darcy is perceived in Hertfordshire society:

“Everybody was pleased to think how much they had always disliked Mr. Darcy before they had known anything of the matter. Miss Bennet was the only creature who could suppose there might be any extenuating circumstances in the case, unknown to the society in Hertfordshire; her mild and steady candour always pleaded for allowances and urged the possibility of mistakes, but by everybody else Mr. Darcy was condemned as the worst of men.” (Austen, 1813/2016, p. 98).

The reader is brought to a point where it is impossible to pass judgement and only entertained observation is left. A third-person narrator, who is frequently omniscient, tells us whether a character is good or bad person. Through the use of free indirect discourse, Austen exposes our own biases, prejudice, and false beliefs, turning us into engaged spectators. It is possible to laugh at the ironic statement that “everybody was pleased to think how much they had always disliked Mr. Darcy” because we know that they had not, particularly Mrs Bennet, and we disliked him because of his behaviour to Elizabeth. However, the reader is not in possession of full facts at this point in the narrative either. The closest to a moral guide is Jane

Bennet, but the reader has also seen that she is hurt by her trusting nature when Mr Bingley does not renew his addresses to her.

Despite this, the novel constantly presents moral dilemmas through characters marked by pride and prejudice. (Zimmerman, 1968, p. 68). Because of its portrayal of moral complexities and the constant presentation of moral dilemmas *Pride and Prejudice* can be useful in the classroom. The themes give way for an analysis on the nature of judgment and prejudice, prompting discussions on how initial perceptions can often be misguided. By examining the reactions of the characters towards Mr. Darcy, pupils can explore the themes of social bias and individual perception. Moreover, this passage invites pupils to consider the limitations of their own judgments and the importance of empathy and open-mindedness when forming opinions about others. Exploring the themes of pride and prejudice in this text aligns with the goals of LK20, especially in the context of preventing prejudice. (Udir, 2024). This approach is particularly effective in an L2 classroom, where pupils are exposed to diverse cultures, religions, and countries through their studies. The classroom is a space where biases and prejudices can emerge, making it crucial to engage pupils in discussions that challenge any preconceptions. By searching into the themes, pride, and prejudice, pupils can gain more knowledge and awareness of how biases can influence our perceptions and behaviours. Ultimately, this can cultivate a more inclusive and empathetic classroom environment.

Finally, *Pride and Prejudice* is suitable for teaching in upper secondary school due to its lasting thematic relevance. It is possible to draw from pupils' own experiences and values to connect the topics. Furthermore, the issues within society, gender and ethics today can be compared to those of the nineteenth century, which ultimately can engage pupils in meaningful discussions. (Hansson, 2010, p. 23). These topics encompass women's position in society, the importance of marriage, social class, and pride and prejudice, all of which are highly relevant for classroom learning. Exploring these themes in the classroom provides pupils with a perspective to examine and understand the complexities of society, ethics, and gender both in Austen's time and in contemporary society. Moreover, discussing the themes allows for critical reflections on the progress made since the early nineteenth century and the challenges that still persist. This engagement enhance pupils' understanding of literature, its value, and also fosters their critical literacy skills.

6.3 Classroom Applications

After exploring the relevance and benefits of older literature such as *Pride and Prejudice* in the upper secondary classroom, this thesis offers practical suggestions for integrating the novel into the L2 classroom. While specific suggestions will be provided, it is essential to acknowledge that effective teaching strategies must be tailored to suit the unique characteristics of each class. Teachers should consider the pupils' chosen vocational line or study, cultural backgrounds, levels of knowledge and competence, as well as other relevant circumstances that needs consideration. Only by adapting and aligning the teaching approach, by using critical literacy pedagogy, to the needs of the specific pupils can the material be applicable. For Vg1 pupils, reading *Pride and Prejudice* can be difficult due to its intricate language and historical context. It is critical that the approach to teaching this novel is tailored to their skill levels, breaking down complex language into manageable sections and providing sufficient support. Reading and comprehending such a novel takes time and patience, particularly in a classroom setting. Yet, requiring pupils to read longer and more challenging texts is not detrimental, but rather advantageous. (Hoff, 2013, p. 33). However, the pupils will require time to read, reflect, discuss, and analyse the themes and literary techniques in order to fully comprehend them. This process can be too time-consuming for the time allocated for English subject in the timetable.

Close Reading a Passage

Due to the extensiveness of the curriculum and limited time in a school year, an efficient method to teach *Pride and Prejudice* would be to conduct a close reading of a specific passage. Requesting analyses of specific passages from novels can significantly improve one's ability to identify important details in fiction. (Hawthorn, 1895/2023, p. 170).

Furthermore, it is not just a compromise because of time, this thesis has chosen to take that approach because it is much more effective than racing through the novel and only gaining a surface understanding. We want to teach pupils deep-reading skills, critical literacy, and how pupils can apply them more broadly.

However, this close reading is just one aspect of a comprehensive critical analysis of a novel. In addition to recognising significant details within the text, it is important to grasp broader patterns and movements within the entire work. (Hawthorn, 1895/2023, p. 170). This is where teaching the themes of *Pride and Prejudice* becomes particularly relevant. By selecting a specific passage as well as conducting teaching lessons focused on the themes of the novel,

pupils have the opportunity to practice close reading—a valuable skill needing emphasis in education, while also understanding how the passage fits within broader themes.

Hawthorn (1985) offers a list that serves a dual purpose. It is designed to assist in the analysis of a specific passage from a novel or short story. Additionally, it serves as a reminder of the points to consider during the process of reading or re-reading a work of fiction. The essential rule to keep in mind: when unsure, make a note. (p. 171).

- Narrator: Determine single or multiple, implied gender and opinions, reliability, and access to characters' thoughts.
- Medium: Identify consistent or variable mediums like spoken, written, letters, etc.
- Paratext: Note title, epigraph, dedication, chapter headings, illustrations, font use.
- Tempo: Describe telling-time and told-time relation, plot advancement, events.
- Setting: Specify time, location, symbolic or historical significance.
- Genre: Classify clear or mixed genre, any genre-busting elements.
- Tone: Describe familiar or formal tone, addressee, delivery style.
- Characterisation: Discuss significance of names, how characters are revealed (telling or showing), development.
- Dialogue: Note use of Direct, Indirect, or Free Indirect Discourse, functions of dialogue.
- Thoughts: Consider access to characters' thoughts, self-knowledge.
- Dramatic Involvement: Analyse reader engagement, manipulation of distance.
- Symbol/Image: Recognise patterns of symbolism, repeated images.
- Theme: Identify themes and any new thematic elements.
- Response: Share personal responses, identification with characters, reactions to plot.

Providing pupils with a checklist like this can be a beneficial in their study of *Pride and Prejudice*. It offers a structured approach to analysing the novel's elements, encouraging close reading and critical thinking. Teachers can modify the checklist to suit the needs of their pupils, adding or removing elements as necessary to avoid overwhelming them. This checklist functions as a guide for pupils to explore themes, characters, settings, and other essential aspects of the novel, enhancing their understanding and engagement with the text.

This thesis proposes working with a specific passage from Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth, as it is a significant moment in *Pride and Prejudice*. This passage encapsulates several of the identified key themes of the novel, such as social class, marriage, and pride. By close reading and analysing Mr. Collins' arrogant and misguided proposal, pupils can look into the complexities of societal expectations and gender roles. It also provides an opportunity to examine Elizabeth's character and her rejection of these expectations. This passage is a microcosm of the broader themes and conflicts present in the novel, making it an ideal focus point for deeper exploration and critical analysis.

"...Soon as they were gone, Mr. Collins began.

"Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that your modesty, so far from doing you any disservice, rather adds to your other perfections. You would have been less amiable in my eyes had there not been this little unwillingness; but allow me to assure you, that I have your respected mother's permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house, I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it would be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying(...)Thus much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed towards Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I can assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains but for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the four per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married."

It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now. “You are too hasty, sir,” she cried. “You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without further loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than to decline them.”

(Austen, 1813/2016, pp. 76-77).

This passage has much to offer as a choice for classroom analysis. Firstly, it provides an example of the societal expectations and pressures surrounding marriage and social class during the Regency period. Mr. Collins’ pompous and self-serving proposal underscores the stark contrast between his view of marriage as a practical arrangement based on inheritance and Elizabeth’s belief in love and individual freedom. This contrast allows pupils to explore the theme of marriage in the novel, examining how different characters perceive and approach this institution. Secondly, the passage gives insight into the characters. Mr. Collins’ self-centeredness and lack of awareness are evident in his presumptuous and long-winded proposal, which also reveals his mercenary motives for choosing a wife. On the other hand, Elizabeth’s firm, and independent nature is exposed through her rejection of the proposal. Her refusal to compromise her principles for societal expectations demonstrates her strength of character and her unwillingness to settle for a loveless marriage. Moreover, the language says much about rules of politeness in that society. For example: “I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals...” It might be necessary to explain the archaic use of ‘sensible’ to mean ‘feel/ aware of’ and other language elements that differentiate from the wordings pupils are used to today. It becomes important to teach what the language says about social rules and the politeness required in that society in order for pupils to fully grasp the context.

In the passage, Mr. Collins is not so much asking Elizabeth to marry him as he is presenting his reasons for the marriage, almost assuming her acceptance. His use of phrases like “when we are married” instead of “if we are married” highlights his presumptuousness and sense of entitlement. This provides a contrast to modern-day notions of marriage, where mutual consent, love, and respect are considered fundamental. By examining Mr. Collins’ statements, pupils are exposed to the historical context of marriages and social expectations in the nineteenth century, and can draw parallels to current times, to make pupils aware that there are different norms and social codes still persisting today.

Furthermore, it opens discussions on how Mr. Collins views marriage as a practical arrangement based on social status and financial considerations, rather than a union of love and mutual understanding. This can bring conversations on how social attitudes to marriage have evolved over time, with a focus on individual choice and more significantly romance in contemporary society. This comparative analysis encourages critical thinking about the evolution of social norms and values surrounding marriage, offering valuable insights into both the novel and present-day society.

Roleplay or Adaptation

Literature can help pupils developing their interpretative skills. Lazar (1993) notes that literature is a particularly effective tool for cultivating pupils' abilities to infer meaning and make interpretations. (p. 19). Roleplay involves interpretation and meaning-making as it requires pupils to develop their own versions of the characters and story. Roleplay serves as an effective learning opportunity by encouraging pupils to adopt a normative and responsible attitude when facing problems. It allows them to be creatively expressive in their language use, providing an opportunity for rehearsal and preparation before speaking. This process can help reduce pupils' anxiety levels. (Syuhda Uin & Kalijaga, 2017, p. 85). Additionally, roleplay enables pupils to demonstrate English language use in authentic situations, emphasising communication skills, underlined in LK20.

Roleplay is an effective method towards teaching *Pride and Prejudice* because it allows pupils to immerse themselves in the world of the novel. By taking on the roles of Elizabeth, Darcy, and other characters, pupils can learn more about their perspectives and relationships. It can also make the literature more engaging and memorable, providing a dynamic way to explore the novel. It would test their understanding of the social norms and expressions of politeness in Austen's time. It is more like a genre exercise in that respect; will they understand what Regency English is authentically.

Task suggestion:

- Divide the class into groups and assign each group a character from the novel.
- Ask each group to prepare a short role-playing skit based on a significant scene involving their assigned character. For example, one group can act out the Meryton assembly where Darcy and Elizabeth first meet.
- After, facilitate a discussion where pupils remain in character to explore their actions in the scene.

- Encourage pupils to ask each other questions while still in character.
- Teacher brings up the topic of politeness, and what they perceive Regency society to be (characteristics).

Moreover, if teachers want to focus on promoting a cultural understanding, using adaptations could be beneficial. Cultural understanding entails the ability to acknowledge, value, and respect the values, beliefs, traditions, and viewpoints of diverse cultures. Beyond simply acquiring knowledge about different cultures, cultural understanding requires a deeper comprehension and sensitivity towards the ways of life, experiences, and perspectives of others. This encompasses recognising how historical, social, and environmental factors shape cultural practices and behaviours. (Godwin Olaoye & Daniel, 2024, p. 3). A deeper comprehension is important in a role-play and pupils could demonstrate this comprehension in their performance. Literary adaptations, which transform written works into various mediums such as film, theatre, or television, can be beneficial for teaching pupils more about cultural understanding. These adaptations are valuable as they offer visual interpretations, contextualise cultural elements, reach global audiences, and promote appreciation of cultural heritage. (Godwin Olaoye & Daniel, 2024, p. 3).

Adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* provide an immersive and multi-dimensional approach towards exploring the novel. Through visual interpretations pupils can experience the cultural elements depicted in the story. For example, they can observe the customs, traditions, costumes, and manners of the period in a more vivid and engaging manner. Furthermore, this thesis advocates for the utilisation of the BBC's 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* or the 2005 film adaptation due to their insight into the original work by exploring the choices made on what to include from the novel, costumes, scenes, angles, casting, and the script. Teachers can allocate time to show the entire 2005 film, providing pupils with a comprehensive overview of the storyline and characters. However, for a more detailed and historically accurate exploration of the novel's themes, settings, and character interactions, showing selected clips from the BBC series would be particularly beneficial.

The BBC adaptation, known for its attention to detail and faithfulness to the novel's dialogue, offers a multimodal approach to the story. Multimodality considers how people construct meaning through various modes and is the use of several different forms of literacy in a single medium. (Rowell & Walsh, 2011, pp. 55-56). The development of multimodal critical literacy, communicative competence, or "the ability to understand the combined potential of

various modes for making meaning,” is likely to be made possible for L2 through multimodal literacy practices (Royce 2002, as cited in, Yi, 2014). For example, pupils must examine how sound and image relate to language. They are likely to strengthen their multimodal communicative competence as a result. (Yi, 2014). Incorporating clips from the BBC series alongside discussions and analyses of the novel would be the most advantageous for obtaining a multimodal approach towards critical literacy.

A suggested classroom instruction is to conduct a comparison between the passage depicting Mr. Collins’s proposal in the novel and the corresponding scene of the proposal in the BBC adaptation. This comparison allows pupils to analyse how the same event is portrayed differently in the written text versus its visual interpretation. By closely examining the dialogue, body language, setting, and character expressions in the BBC adaptation, pupils can understand more of how these elements contribute to the overall meaning and tone of the scene and how it differs from the original text. This can also be explored by viewing the scene where Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s first meet at the Meryton Ball. Their encounter at the Meryton Ball serves as an important scene able for analysis. The setting of the ball is grand, showcasing a beautiful ballroom and extravagant costumes, underlining the norms of clothing in that society. The other guests’ movements and mood contrast Mr. Darcy’s reserved demeanour and contempt for the local society, which are evident in his pridefulness amid the lively ballroom atmosphere. At this ball, the actors are very expressive with their body language. For example, when Mr. Darcy says, “She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me,” the camera pans to Elizabeth, who is sitting quietly and merely turns her head to watch Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley talk. She expresses her feelings through facial expressions and glancing over with her eyes. Pupils can investigate how the adaptation uses nonverbal cues and this can enhance their comprehension of the novel.

Finally, while these exercises promote literacy through critical analysis, they are not skills that can be passively transmitted by the teacher. Teachers can facilitate learning in critical literacy, yet they can only guide their pupils toward developing critical individuality. (Beck, 2005, p. 399). This is further supported by Olusegun (2015), who emphasises that teachers cannot merely impart knowledge to pupils; pupils need to build their own competence (p. 66). However, for teachers to effectively utilise the benefits of critical literacy in educational settings, they must apply innovative approaches to reading. To undertake this task successfully, they need a solid grasp of the theoretical underpinnings of critical literacy, and a reinforcement of their professional beliefs. (Blixen & Pannell, 2020, p. 12).

This underscores the need for active engagement and practice to develop these skills effectively. Teachers should create an environment where pupils are encouraged to think critically, independently analyse texts, and formulate their own interpretations. Implementing close reading of a passage, engaging in roleplay, or comparing text to adaptations are just a few examples of how to approach *Pride and Prejudice* in the L2 classroom. There are numerous other methods and strategies that can be employed, although not all can be covered in this thesis. Each teacher may tailor their approach based on the specific needs, interests, and proficiency levels of their pupils.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate how pre-twentieth-century literature can be used in English upper secondary class, especially Vg1 English, to develop critical literacy skills. This has been accomplished by demonstrating critical literacy approaches through a close reading and thematic analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) By Jane Austen. The connection made between teaching *Pride and Prejudice* and the four core curriculum values—human dignity, identity and cultural diversity, critical thinking and ethical awareness, democracy, and participation—has shown the novel’s relevance for upper secondary education.

Reading is a fundamental component of language learning, and even with the abundance of literary material made available by LK20, the importance of pre-twentieth century literature cannot be understated. It is vital to keep introducing older literature in a constantly shifting media world, to encourage close reading. More precisely, I have argued that reading older literature promotes understanding of other cultures and provides insight into the customs and values of an earlier society. The pupils are able to acquire an understanding of how specific social circumstances, language, and literature contribute to cultural contexts, have an influence on society, and impact the values they uphold. By analysing the themes: Women’s Position in Society, the Importance of Marriage, Social Class, and *Pride and Prejudice*, this thesis has highlighted the most central aspects of the novel and how to use these themes to teach *Pride and Prejudice*.

Through this thematic investigation, working with *Pride and Prejudice* aligns with the LK20 core curriculum values. The novel is an effective resource for teachers because of its commentary on societal norms, class dynamics, and personal development. These topics are pertinent to the study of human dignity. The pupils can examine the difficulties people encounter in asserting their value and the subtleties of human dignity in various social contexts through the experiences of the characters. Additionally, *Pride and Prejudice* offers material for analysing identity and cultural diversity because it emphasises social class and personal identity. Studying Regency England can help pupils understand cultural differences. Pupils who read *Pride and Prejudice* are exposed to the challenges of defining one’s identity and the concept of self-assertion as an essential element. This ultimately broadens their understanding of identity-formation, and diverse cultural expressions and practices.

Pride and Prejudice also closely aligns to the curriculum's core value, ethical awareness, and critical thinking. Pupils engage in critical reflection and ethical inquiry by examining topics of pride, prejudice, societal expectations, and moral dilemmas. Additionally, by integrating *Pride and Prejudice* into lessons where pupils engage in critical analysis of societal structures and values, this meets the objective of democracy and participation. Pupils are urged to consider how crucial it is to promote inclusivity and confront prejudice and bias. The novel functions as a gateway for broader discussions where pupils develop an increased awareness of the intricacies of democratic principles and the continuous push for equality and social participation. By analysing the characters' choices and the consequences of their actions, pupils develop the skills to question assumptions and make informed ethical judgments, and by doing so meeting the requirements of critical literacy.

By taking this critically literate approach to *Pride and Prejudice*, pupils are exposed to the ways that language and social norms form personal experience. This challenges pupils to approach meaning-making in a way that they might not if the language felt more familiar to their own society. Pupils develop critical reading skills that are vital when interacting with the text by encountering unfamiliar language, tone, and cultural contexts. Thus, *Pride and Prejudice*, influenced by cultural differences, awakens critical reading skills in pupils that may not be as easily stimulated by more familiar language use, specifically highlighting the importance of using pre-twentieth century literature in L2 classrooms.

Teachers can effectively integrate *Pride and Prejudice* into the L2 classroom by close reading Mr. Collins's proposal to Elizabeth as it offers an illustration of the social pressures and expectations that surrounded marriage and social class in the Regency period. An analysis of the passage provides insight into the novel's situated themes and can provide a comparative analysis of Regency society and modern society, encouraging critical thinking about the transformation of social classes, women's position in society, the importance of marriage as well as pride and prejudice. Furthermore, other effective methods to teach the novel is by having the pupils role-playing the characters or using the novel and BBC's 1995 adaptation or the 2005 film adaptation to analyse and study the similarities and differences between visual and written communication and meaning-making, and this develops multimodal critical literacy. Nevertheless, adapting the teaching materials to the pupils' proficiency levels is the most important part of introducing *Pride and Prejudice* in an L2 classroom, only by doing so can *Pride and prejudice* contribute to the development of critical literacy skills.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, far from being irrelevant to the lives of modern Norwegian teenagers, engaging with pre-twentieth-century literature provides enough distance from their social context to learn critical literacy methods, enabling them to view their own social context and views with more critical distance.

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