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Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Competence in Norwegian Upper Primary Education

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ABSTRACT

This master thesis concerns itself with the multifaceted term of intercultural competence in the context of English language learning in Norwegian upper primary classrooms. In the backdrop of a world that is becoming increasingly globalized with a need for fostering intercultural understanding, this study explores how Norwegian teachers in the English subject both teach and assess the development of intercultural competence among their learners. The research's foundation and guide throughout this process is the theoretical framework and the Norwegian curriculum agreeing on the significance of equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary and thereby preparing them for diverse cultural interaction.

Through a qualitative analysis, a focus group interview with three experienced teachers was conducted. The results revealed a strong alignment between the teachers' perceptions and established frameworks of intercultural competence. The teachers prioritized teaching cultural knowledge and communicative skills with an emphasis on factual information over a deeper cultural understanding. While the teachers valued openness and respect, the results indicate a need for more explicit planning and teaching of attitudes within the classroom context. Additionally, the results highlight the teachers' deliberate choice of using diverse resources and presents teachers' challenges in assessing intercultural competence due to its complexity and multifaceted nature. Despite the complexities, this thesis emphasizes the importance of integrating intercultural competence into teaching practices and advocates for continued research on how to enhance assessment strategies so that teachers are equipped to prepare their learners for a diverse globalized world.

NORSK SAMMENDRAG

Denne masteroppgaven omhandler det mangefasetterte begrepet interkulturell kompetanse i den konteksten hvor det engelske språket læres bort i klasserommene på mellomtrinnet i Norge. I bakteppet av en verden som stadig blir mer globaliser med behov for å fremme interkulturell forståelse, utforsker denne studien hvordan norske engelsklærere både underviser og vurderer utviklingen av interkulturell kompetanse blant sine elever. Forskningens grunnlag og veiledning gjennom denne prosessen er det teoretiske rammeverket og den norske læreplanen som begge er enige om betydningen av å utstyre elevene med den kunnskapen, ferdighetene og holdningene som er nødvendige og som dermed vil forberede dem for mangfoldig kulturelle interaksjoner.

Gjennom en kvalitativ analyse ble det gjennomført et fokusgruppeintervju med tre erfarne lærere. Resultatene viste sterkt samsvar mellom lærernes oppfatninger og de etablerte rammeverkene for interkulturell kompetanse. Lærerne prioriterte å undervise i kunnskap om kulturer samt kommunikative ferdigheter hvor de la vekt på informasjon basert på fakta fremfor en dypere kulturell forståelse. Lærerne verdsatte åpenhet og respekt, men resultatene indikerer et behov for mer eksplisitt planlegging og undervisning av holdninger innenfor klasseromskonteksten. I tillegg fremhever resultatene lærernes bevisste valg i å bruke ulike ressurser, og presenterer lærernes utfordringer med å vurdere interkulturell kompetanse på grunn av dens kompleksitet og mangefasetterte natur. Til tross for kompleksiteten, understreker denne oppgaven viktigheten av å integrere interkulturell kompetanse i undervisningspraksis, og tar til orde for fortsatt forskning på hvordan man kan forbedre vurderingsstrategier slik at lærere er rustet til å forberede elevene sine på en mangfoldig og globalisert verden.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This master thesis will explore the multifaceted topic of intercultural competence in language education, specifically within the context of English language learning in Norwegian upper primary classrooms. It will explore how teachers, through their pedagogical approaches and perspectives, aim to foster intercultural understanding among their learners and how they assess this development through the lens of interculturalism, the accompanying theoretical framework for intercultural competence, and the renewed Norwegian curriculum in the English subject. The following section will present the backdrop and rationale behind this thesis. Following, is this thesis's clarification and definitions of terms relevant to this exploration of intercultural competence and the specific research questions that is at the centre of this study.

1.1 Background

In today's rapidly evolving globalized world, intercultural competence has emerged as a critical skillset to navigate and interact with both our own and other cultures. There has been an increase in populism, xenophobia, and radicalisation in Europe where radical voices question the value of diversity (Shuali et al., 2020, p. 5). As Norwegian children are growing up in this ever evolving globalizes world, our society are becoming more diverse and they are increasingly interacting with people whose background are different from their own in terms of culture, religion, nationality, etc. (Borchgrevink & Hansen, 2018, p. 97). Research show that teachers struggle to address their classrooms increasing diversity (Shuali et al., 2020, p. 8). Because we live in a time dominated by near constant intercultural interactions where individuals and communities are continually engaging with others from diverse cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2013, p. 4), intercultural competence has gained recognition for its ability to counter prejudice in the Norwegian curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

These encounters and experiences, also known as interactions, have made intercultural competence into an essential tool for navigating the complex web of cultural boundaries and promoting positive and meaningful interactions. The tool of intercultural competence is a complex one, and therefore it is arguably important to begin the development of attaining its components such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes at an early age. Norwegian learners of

English start their explicit development intercultural competence in primary school as stated by the Norwegian curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The Norwegian learners of English need to be able to communicate effectively both at home and abroad and this requires more than just language skills (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 10). The learners would also need to know how to use these skills in communication with others, requiring practice.

The significance of intercultural competence is underscored by UNESCO's assertion that it is now a near constant feature of modern life due to the increasing interconnectivity of cultures and societies (UNESCO, 2013, p. 4). It is thus imperative for learners to develop the ability to effectively communicate and interact across cultural differences, and this is reflected in the revised Norwegian curriculum, which now places a strong emphasis on diversity as one of its core values (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). As it is up to the teachers to incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching, their responsibility also lies in devising diverse and effective methods for assessing their learners' acquisition of this vital skill. The Council of Europe and UNESCO provides guidance as to how intercultural competence can be developed in school and emphasize its importance (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p.11; UNESCO, 2013; Council of Europe, 2018). The theoretical frameworks on teaching and assessing intercultural competence are detailed and numerous (Deardorff, 2009; Byram, 2021; Fantini, 2009; Dervin, 2010; Dypedahl & Lund, 2020), but there is a lack of research concerning the assessment of intercultural competence in the Norwegian primary context.

In the Norwegian education context, the English language as it is a global *lingua franca*, plays an important role in terms of intercultural competence. As a *lingua franca*, the English language has the means of transcending borders and serving as a bridge for the communication among people with different linguistic backgrounds, both locally and globally. English as a lingua franca offers potential to transcend borders and serve as a bridge for people with different cultural backgrounds as well. Norwegian teachers need to equip their learners with intercultural competence within the framework of learning the English language as it becomes increasingly apparent as English is the central language used in many aspects of life such as popular culture, politics, business, and everyday conversations (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 10). To help their learners succeed in such an intercultural world necessitates the

ability to navigate such daily interactions with people from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Interculturality as a core focus in the Norwegian English curriculum aims to develop learners' understanding of diverse communication patterns, mindsets, and lifestyles (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The competence aims stress the importance of exploring and describing ways of living and thinking, aiming to enhance the intercultural competence among learners (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020). This approach involves exploration, reflection, and the ability to relate to individuals with diverse worldviews and experience and enables individuals to relate to those with differing worldviews and experience (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The Norwegian curriculum will be thoroughly explored in the context of intercultural competence in subchapter 2.1 as it is foundational for the pedagogical choices teachers make.

1.2   Purpose and background for research

The topic of this master thesis was chosen because I found the inherent complexity of intercultural competence to be interesting and wanted to further explore the practices of teaching it. Intercultural competence is emphasized in the national curriculum, and it is an important stepping stone for learners to gain the competency necessary to meet, understand, and navigate a world that is increasingly more globalized. This thesis can form a basis of understanding how they currently are taught these competencies and what teachers are considering and focused on in assessing their learners' achievement or development.

The aspect concerning the assessment of intercultural competence is a key point of this thesis as its inherent complexity makes it harder to assess all of its components. Additionally, is a topic I had heard being spoken of or discussed in the context of my praxis or when working in Norwegian primary schools. At the early stages of deciding the topic of my master thesis, I found very little research on assessment of intercultural competence in a primary context, and even less in the context of Norwegian primary. Therefore, I believe this thesis is needed to provide information of the Norwegian context in terms of assessing intercultural competence. The information derived from this thesis is a step towards gaining information on the actual practices of Norwegian Engliss teachers and can hopefully be a beneficial contribution to

improving both researchers and teachers' knowledge, understanding, teaching of, and assessment of intercultural competence in the English subject.

1.3 Definitions

As this thesis focuses on teachers' reflections and choices in the classroom concerning English learners' development of intercultural competence and their assessment of this development, it is necessary to define the terminology that will be used throughout to provide a basis of understanding for the key concepts that will be presented. This sub chapter details the definition of learning English as a foreign language, intercultural competence, and intercultural communicative competence.

1.3.1 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence stands as a fundamental term that is essential in the framework of this thesis. Its complexity and multifaceted nature will not be thoroughly explored due to the limited scope of a master thesis. It is important to note that there are numerous definitions and frameworks relating to intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66) as it is not a neatly defined and measurable skill and involves a dynamic and evolving capability that is rooted in navigating diverse cultural encounters. The discourse surrounding interculturality recognizes its inherent complexity, as articulated by scholars who emphasize the need to perceive beyond the surface, delving into the hidden and unexpressed aspects within intercultural interactions (Dervin, 2015; Kramsch, 2011).

To establish a foundational understanding, this thesis adopts Deardorff's (2006, p. 247) definition of intercultural competences as encompassing "knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing oneself. Linguistic competence plays a key role". This involves having the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that enables individuals to adapt to new cultural contexts and build relationships with people from diverse backgrounds (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). These relationships are enabled by being able to "adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles in order to perform effectively and appropriately" without being limited by individuals or societal backgrounds (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5). UNESCO names cultural competence as a literacy skill,

meaning that cultural literacy thus can be argued to become on par with skills such as reading or writing.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) includes the capacity to bridge one's own cultural background with other cultures to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and using diverse strategies for interacting with individuals from different backgrounds to learners' intercultural skills and know-how (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 104-105). The CEFR means that proficiency in intercultural skills and know-how can serve as a cultural intermediary for the learners to effectively navigate intercultural conflicts and misunderstanding in addition to having the capability to transcend stereotypical cultural relationships.

At its core, through Byram's (1997) work on intercultural competence in foreign language education, he argues that it involves the ability to communicate effectively amidst diverse mindsets and communication patterns, transcending mere linguistic differences. It impacts interactions between individuals of varying cultural backgrounds and encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Byram's (1997: 2020, p. 62-63) work contributes significantly to the understanding of these facets and describes five *savoirs* that the theory chapter will delve further into: knowledge, interpretation, engagement, discovery/interaction skills and attitudes. These *savoirs*, referring to competences, underpins intercultural competence and is by Byram (2020, p. 61-62) a fusion of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that is essential for navigating interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

1.3.2   Intercultural communicative competence

In the 1980s and 90s the notion of intercultural competence emerged in foreign language education at the same time as communicative competence came into focus and the term intercultural communicative competence is therefore used (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 19). Within the exploration of communication embedded within intercultural competence in the theoretical framework, the term "intercultural communicative competence" is used, and this encapsulates the "ability to interact with people from another social group in another language" (Byram, 2020, p. 97), and is by Byram (2002, p. 9) defined as the "ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in

one's own and other cultures and countries". This is relevant because linguistic competence emerges as a significant facet within this thesis's definition of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247).

ICC is relevant for language teaching, and different from IC more generally.
A situation requiring intercultural competence is one where each individual attempts to understand the others culture, meaning the values beliefs and behaviours they have acquired in their socialisation. Intercultural communicative competence is needed in interactions when for example "terminology in one language cannot be translated into another, or when national educational and legal cultures and discourses are different" (Byram, 2020, p. 167). Intercultural communicative competence includes both language competence and intercultural competence and is therefore relevant to this thesis as the English subject curriculum emphasizes both language learning and the development of intercultural competence (Byram, 2020, p. 167; Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). Intercultural communicative competence is also necessary in an interaction where there is power inequality or there is non-verbal communication. The latter is not as relevant to language learning but exemplifies the differences between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence.

Examples of intercultural communication are presented by Byram (2021, p. 42) as:

> Between people of different languages and countries where one is a native speaker of the language used; between people of different languages and countries where the language used is a lingua franca; and between people of the same country but different languages, one of whom is a native speaker of the language used.

These examples showcase the situations and interactions learners need to be prepared to navigate through using both communicational and cultural skills and knowledge in the English language.

1.3.3   English as a foreign language

This thesis will identify Norwegian English learners as English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. An argument could be made for identifying these learners as English as a second language (ESL) learners (Rindal, 2020, p. 33-34). It is worth noting that Norwegian learners

can fit into both groups as English usage has grown beyond just a school context as it is a daily part of most learners' lives through the use of social media and digital platforms. Since there are Norwegian schools where the majority of the learners have a mother tongue that is not Norwegian (Surkalovic, 2014), using EFL is a more natural and suitable term. Some Norwegian learners would not necessarily fit into the category of learners who learn English as a second language, and for this thesis to be as inclusive as possible, it will describe learners as EFL learners. Additionally, it is important to recognize that English might not always be the learners' second language, as they might already speak other languages at home. For Norwegian Sami speakers, English will usually be their third or fourth language. English is also the third largest language in Norway but has no official status (Surkalovic, 2014).

1.4   Research questions

As the main objective is to explore and gain a better understanding of the actual teaching in Norwegian upper primary classroom and its incorporation of intercultural competence in the English subject, the primary research questions are:

1. How are Norwegian English teachers incorporating intercultural competence into their lesson planning, classroom activities, planned and unplanned teaching?
2. How are teachers assessing their learners progress in developing intercultural competence?

To delve deeper into the details of what these research questions actually aims to understand, there are three sub questions belonging to the main research questions:

a. How do the teachers understand the concept of intercultural competence?
b. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do they believe are relevant for the development of intercultural competence?
c. What strategies and resources are they using to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they deem relevant?
d. How do they address and assess learners' development of intercultural competence?

These research questions aim to provide information into the perspectives, reflections, practices, and experiences of English teachers regarding intercultural competence within the

Norwegian educational context with a focus on the English subject and its role in promoting intercultural understanding and communication skills among learners.

1.5   Thesis structure

The subsequent chapters of this thesis will delve deeper into the theoretical frameworks of intercultural competence, pedagogical approaches for teaching intercultural competence in EFL classrooms as well as the assessment methods employed to evaluate learners' intercultural competence. Included in the second chapter is the relevant previous research conducted in the field with a following third chapter on the methodological considerations and decisions concerning the research design, the research process and the ethical reflections taken. Continuing, the fourth chapter will outline the research results followed by a discussion on the contents of the results in light of the theoretical framework and previous research. Finally, a chapter containing this thesis's final conclusions is included. Through this exploration and the contents of these chapters, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on intercultural education in teaching EFL.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The following sub chapters will present the main theories and research relevant for this research project. As I am exploring the thoughts, reflections, and experiences of Norwegian English teachers in their work with intercultural competence and its assessment, it is necessary to explore the information and its implications provided by the guiding theory and research. The Norwegian curriculum shapes Norwegian teachers' pedagogical choices and is therefore a natural inclusion as the first sub chapter. Following is an overarching introduction to the field of intercultural competence continuing with detailed presentation and discussion of Byram's intercultural competence model and Deardorff's theory on intercultural competence. A detailed exploration on the theory behind the assessment of intercultural competence is also included as well as established methods and resources for teaching intercultural competence. This chapter finishes with an overview of relevant research conducted on the topic of teaching intercultural competence and its assessment. This sub-chapter detailing the theoretical framework and previous research aims to explore and contextualize the teaching of intercultural competence and how it can be assessed, within the scope and limitation of this master's thesis.

2.1   Intercultural Competence in the Norwegian curriculum

The Norwegian context, like many others, has experienced an influx of cultural diversity due to globalization, technological advancements, and migration (Hoff, 2020). Norwegian teachers and schools are now tasked with educating learners from a large variety of backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence within the education system (Borchgrevink & Hansen, 2018). In recognizing the need to equip learners with intercultural understanding and communication skills, the Norwegian Directorate for Education has integrated intercultural competence in the curricula for foreign languages (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020).

The foundation of the Norwegian education system lies within its curriculum and serves as a contractual agreement between educational institutions and learners (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). This is a pivotal document that not only shapes teaching methodologies, but also directs educators on the essential components within education. As previously mentioned, the significance of fostering intercultural competence has become a central theme

in parts of the new curriculum, based on the insight from the Core Curriculum, specific competency aims and other parts of the English and foreign languages curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019) which will now be presented.

Within the Core Curriculum, foundational values such as human dignity advocates for equality regardless of differences (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). It emphasizes diversity as a societal asset where each learner must be allowed to express themselves freely. It also underscores the importance of language skills in the facilitation of communications as well as nurturing cultural awareness. Some of the key points highlighted are critical thinking and ethical awareness which can urge an understanding of personal biases and foster learners' ability to engage interculturally through scrutiny and reflection (Byram, 2021). Byram's (2021) model of intercultural competence will be given a closer examination further along in this theory chapter, but it underscores openness, curiosity, and exploration. This is echoed in the curriculums call for nurturing these traits in young minds. Additionally, the curriculum stresses environmental consciousness and democratic values, aiming to counter discrimination and prejudice while promoting cooperation and dialogue (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

In the section called *Relevance and central values* the English curriculum states that "the subject shall give the pupils the foundation for communicating with others, both locally, and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). This foundation for communication involves developing the learners English-language competency in reading, writing and oral communication. As it is directly relevant to this thesis, the curriculum tasks the English language subject with helping "the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). Additionally, this steering document is tasking the teachers in this subject to help learners understand how the learners' own worldviews are dependent on their cultural upbringing. It wants to open the learners to new ways of viewing and interpreting the world while promoting curiosity and engagement with the task of helping preventing prejudice in the learners.

The core elements in the English curriculum involves communication, language learning and working with texts in English. It implores that learners should be able to use strategies in oral situations as well as in written texts that are suitable for communication. Teachers are to

provide their learners with the opportunity "to express themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). To enable learners to communicate in English they need enough knowledge of English language as a system and are well-versed enough in pronunciation, vocabulary, word structure, syntax, and text composition, providing them with "choices and possibilities in their communication and interaction" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). Identifying the connections between English and other languages the learners are familiar with is a part of language learning which takes place when they encounter texts in English.

The English curriculum defines texts in a broad sense including both spoken and written texts containing a multitude of various forms (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). This core element emphasized that learners shall experience diversity both linguistically and culturally to help their development of knowledge. This section states that learners will develop intercultural competence by gaining the language and knowledge of various cultures and societies trough reflection, interpretation and by critically assessing a diverse array of English texts. As such, the learners will develop the intercultural competence "enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). Intercultural competence is also interwoven throughout the interdisciplinary topics, emphasizing respect, conflict resolution and analysis, all vital components contributing to its development (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3).

The curriculum's emphasis on intercultural competence extends beyond the English subject and permeates diverse disciplines from science to mathematics. While each subject offers avenues of exploring cultural perspectives, the teaching of the English language holds a unique position in fostering intercultural understanding because of its role in learning about other cultures such as through the competency aims for Year 7: "investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 8). In terms of other competence aims of the English subject related to intercultural competence, the curriculum emphasizes reading, interpreting, and discussing texts from various genres, along with delving into cultural facets (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 7-8). Beyond the notions of grammar and vocabulary, the curriculum can serve as a conduit for cultural exchange and interaction (Byram, 2021; Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

In the teaching of foreign languages such as French, German, and Spanish, intercultural competence has a central place in the curriculum as it is a core element on its own (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Here, the curriculum states that the learners after year 10 should have "knowledge about and an explorative approach to other languages, cultures, ways of life and ways of thinking open for new perspectives on the world and ourselves" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). In this subject the curriculum refers to intercultural competence as developing curiosity about, insight into, and understanding of diversity on a cultural and linguistic level, as well as a local and global perspective on their interactions with others.

In other parts of the curriculum the term 'intercultural competence' is not directly mentioned but is indirectly mentioned in the subject of social studies where the learners are to understand connections between and the impact of geographical, historical, and current conditions on themselves and society (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The content of the core element of 'understanding and participating in democracy' advocates for viewing the mentioned conditions from various perspectives (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019) which is arguably a component of intercultural competence. Additionally, in the social studies subject, the learners shall learn about the systems of government and the protection of human rights and minorities in countries as well as how these differences continuously influence and impact other people's lives (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

This thesis aim is partly to explore teachers' assessment of intercultural competence, and it is therefore necessary to view how the curriculum guides their work in upper elementary. The English curriculum provides guidance on the teacher's role in formative assessment of English skills. Among those related to assessment of intercultural competence is allowing the opportunity to experiment on their own and with others (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 8). As the learners demonstrate their reading, oral, digital, and writing skills in various situations, they should have the opportunity to express their views on what they have achieved and their improvement of skills. The teachers should then provide the learners with guidance on how they could improve further, followed by adapting their teaching in order for learners to use the provided guidance for continuous development of their skills (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 8). The guidance the curriculum provides allows for

freedom in using strategies and learning resources as the teacher see fit in order to develop their learners' English language skills.

The competencies mentioned so far form the crux of this thesis and reflect the necessity for learners to comprehend diverse ways of living, communication patterns and mindsets within the English-speaking world. The new Core Curriculum accentuates the role of English in the development of intercultural understanding and emphasizes the interconnectedness of different cultures, thus laying the groundwork for learners to navigate an increasingly globalized world (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

2.2   Intercultural competence

According to (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 9), we can trace terms such as *intercultural competence*, *intercultural adaptation,* and *intercultural effectiveness* back to the 1970's and 1980's when there was a need for governments, educational and business representatives to be interculturally competent. Efforts to refine measures of intercultural competence resulted in the reveal of intercultural competence as multidimensional in nature with the follow up questions being of which dimensions, and why (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 9). Deardorff (2011, p. 66) argues that their study (2006) was the first to document consensus among the experts on aspects of intercultural competence through using research methodology called the Delphi technique. This model focuses on the outcomes of intercultural competence, both internal and external, where intercultural competence's external outcome is defined as "effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). While many frameworks and models of intercultural competence have been developed, a few have been chosen for the next sub chapter to provide a more thorough review as they relate to the teaching and assessment of intercultural competence.

2.2.1   Deardorff's theory on intercultural competence

Deardorff (2006, 2011) presents a theory of intercultural competence that emphasize the individual's ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. This theory is based on five key dimensions: attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, language proficiency as well as behaviours

and actions. Deardorff (2011) argues that those individuals with high levels of intercultural competence have positive attitudes and beliefs toward other cultures, a deep understanding of cultural differences and similarities that exist between individuals, strong communications skills, as well as the ability to adjust their actions and behaviour according to the cultural context they find themselves in. Supporting this argument and in the context of language education, according to Byram (2009, p. 323-324) EFL learners should among other competencies acquire the skills to understand and reflect on different behaviour and values as well as becoming aware of the culture, values, perspectives, and beliefs of one's own culture.

Deardorff (2011) made a list of the minimal requirements included to attain intercultural competence, and it involves respect, self-awareness/identity, seeing from other perspectives, listening, adapting, building relationships and cultural humility. Continuously building on these skills will contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity and human rights (UNESCO, 2013, p. 24). There is also the importance of contextual factors in the development and assessment of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2011) as intercultural competence should be assessed in various contexts that includes personal, academic, and professional settings. Only the personal and the academic dimension is relevant for this thesis, but intercultural competence will arguably be relevant for the upper primary learners later in life regardless of the language they need to use in a professional setting. This can require an approach to assessment of intercultural competence that is comprehensive and includes both assessment of self and external evaluation of how individuals communicate. Communication is an essential part of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006) as intercultural communicative competence can be described as the "ability to interact with people from another social group in another language" (Byram, 2020, p. 97) as previously discussed.

2.2.2 Fantini's reconceptualizing of intercultural communicative competence

Fantini (2020) introduces the notion of intercultural communicative competence as built on the earlier concept of *communicative competence.* The concept of communicative competence is widely used to identify the dimensions such as linguistic and sociolinguistic components involved in competent communication in any culture (Fantini, 2019, p. 31-38). Fantini (2020) situates language at the heart of a person's intercultural abilities with the term intercultural communicative competence. When adding the communicative competence of a second

language to one's native communicative competence it leads to interactions that are intercultural. Fantini (2020) advocates for a clear and comprehensive definition of intercultural communicative competence and the identification of its subcomponents to provide goals and objectives, to serve as guidelines for implementation and to establish assessment criteria for assessing and monitoring of learners' development of intercultural communicative competence.

In 2019, Fantini conducted an extensive review of the intercultural literature to formulate the concept of intercultural communicative competence and identify its components. This review found that there were several characteristics commonly mentioned including flexibility, patience, openness, humour, and the ability to suspend judgement. These traits are integral within the three key domain and ability to: establish and maintain relationships, effective communication with minimal distortion, and collaboration towards a mutual need or interest. The four commonly mentioned dimensions were awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Proficiency in the host language were found to be indispensable for communication within the host culture and gaining direct insight into the worldview of the host. Lastly, it is important to recognize that level of intercultural communicative competence attainment is an ongoing longitudinal and developmental process that evolves over time.

Fostering intercultural competence within the realm of language education is an important component in preparing learners for a globally interconnected world, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. It requires innovative educational approaches that moves beyond what has traditionally been the primary focus on developing knowledge (Fantini, 2021). Fantini (2021) advocate for a focus shift including the dimensions of awareness, attitudes, and skill in addition to the dimension of knowledge. The ability to navigate cultural diversity, comprehend different perspectives, and communicate effectively across cultural boundaries has garnered significant attention within language teaching pedagogy and Byram's model for teaching intercultural communicative competence will now be explored in detail.

2.2.3   Byram's model of intercultural competence

Dypedahl and Lund (2020, p. 20) argues that the British scholar Michael Byram had developed the most influential model of intercultural competence. Other scholars, such as Deardorff (2006) would describe slight differences in their understanding intercultural

competence, but the central components, as recognized by UNESCO (2013, p. 24), such as respect, self-awareness, decentering, listening, adapting, building relationships, cultural humility, awareness of power relationship, reflexivity, and critical thinking are included in both Deardorff's and Byram's frameworks (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 21). Many of these components are dependent on one another and would not lead to the development of intercultural competence on its own. In combination, these components can reflect intercultural understanding and competence. While this thesis mainly focuses on Byram's model of intercultural competence, it is important to note that there are slight differences among the scholars' models or theories on the subject matter, but the differences are not impacting the research and results of this thesis due to its constraints and therefore not thoroughly explored.

Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model serves as a foundational framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of intercultural competence. The model's purpose is supporting teachers as a guide for teaching intercultural competence in English language classrooms (Byram, 2020, p. 62). This comprehensive model emphasizes attitudes, knowledge, and skills as essential for effective intercultural communication (Fenner & Skulstad, 2020, p. 73; Byram, 2021, p. 19). Underpinning this theoretical framework is a deep-seated comprehension of cultural knowledge and identities. Byram's model advocates for learners to grasp various cultural aspects, historical background, and societal processes, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of cultural identities (UNESCO, 2013, p.10; Huber et al., 2014, p.13). Learners need to be exposed to and learn facts about other languages and cultures than their own in order to develop intercultural competence in addition to critically examining their own culture (Eide et al., 2022). Eide et al. (2022) also points out that the notion of ones "own culture" is nuanced, especially in the Scandinavian classroom where the pupil population is becoming increasingly diverse and the notion of what substantiates Norwegian culture is ever changing and not set in stone.

Byram's model delineates the essential components that are necessary to cultivate intercultural competence among language learners. It emphasizes the significance of positive attitudes such as openness, curiosity, and tolerance, coupled with an in-depth knowledge of one's own and others' cultures (Byram, 2020, p. 45-46). This comprehensive understanding involves not only recognizing stereotypes and prejudices, but also embracing cultural

diversity and the acknowledgement of personal biases in their interactions with other speakers of the same language.

Byram (2020, p. 17) describes the concept of an intercultural speaker as people who are involved in interactions or who communicates interculturally no matter their level of linguistic mastery of a language. A such interaction is judged by how effectively the exchange of information has been as well as how successful it is in terms of establishing and maintaining human relationships. Attitudinal factors can affect the latter in particular as it can impact the speaker's ability to expect problems in communication or accepting criticism on their social group's values, as well as acting as perceived representatives of their country or culture by their counterparts. An intercultural speaker should be able to look past the interaction's interlocutor as a representative of an identity tied to their own preconvictions but perceive their counterpart as someone whose qualities need to be discovered (Byram et al., 2002, p. 5).

In understanding Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), it is essential to understand the five essential components, known as *savoirs*. The five savoirs of intercultural competence are labelled as knowledge, skills of interpreting/relating, skills of discovery/interaction, attitudes-curiosity/openness, and critical cultural awareness in an educational setting (Byram, 2020, p. 62, 96). These savoirs can both relate to and be dependent on each other as intercultural competence is this combination of "attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills" (Huber et al., 2014, p. 16-17) in learners' interaction with other cultures and backgrounds. Additionally, Byram (2020, p. 49, 50) formulated 'objectives' to designate a range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. These are not necessarily the outcome of teaching since the learner might already show the presence of phenomena that is included before the language learning begins but are indicative of the learners understanding and competence attainment. These objectives are not formulated to be observable or measurable with the aim to be less restrictive and is included, where relevant, in the presentation of the savoirs.

Firstly, knowledge as a *savoir* encompasses more than mere facts about cultures. It extends to a deeper understanding of societal values, norms, and historical contexts (Byram, 2020, p. 85-87). The knowledge aspect of intercultural competence involves a deep understanding of others' cultures, spanning countries, societies, cultural customs, identities, and social

mechanisms (Byram, 2020, p. 85-97; Byram and Doyé, 1999, p. 142-143). The term 'culture' will in this context include both tangible aspects like tools, cuisine, and attire as well as intangible elements such as language, religious beliefs, societal norms, and values. These can collectively shape an individual's perceptions and interactions with the world (Huber et al., 2014, p. 13-14). This aspect of intercultural competence also involves an understanding of social group dynamics within one's own or other societies and emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity across cultures (Byram and Doyé, 1999, p. 142-143; Byram, 2020, p. 95-87). It is central to comprehend how identities form in the combination of personal attributes, name, social belonging and socio-economic backgrounds, and that identity is defined by an individuals' views and description of themselves (Huber et al., 2014, p. 13). Cultural identity, specifically, denotes an association with a cultural group and highlights the shared aspects unique to that particular group (UNESCO, 2013, p. 10).

Byram (2020, p. 51) have created learning objectives for the knowledge savoir. A few of the relevant ones will be listed as it concerns what upper primary learners should have knowledge about or of. Beginning with the objectives where learners should know that intercultural communication involves exploring various aspects such as historical and contemporary relationships between one's own country and the interlocutor's country, recognizing the causes and dynamics of how misunderstandings between interlocutors occur between interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds, and understanding how events are remembered in their country might significantly be different in the interlocuter's country. Additionally, it entails knowing about and grasping the national definitions and perspectives of geographical space and socialization process, and how these are perceived from other countries perspectives as well as their own, recognizing social distinctions and institutions that shape the daily life and relationships in one's own and one's interlocutor's country. Lastly, it involves knowledge of and understanding the processes of social interaction within an interlocutor's country. A few of Byram's (2020, p. 51) learning objectives may be too advanced for learners in upper primary, but overall, they mainly involve relational knowledge,

The second savoir concerns the skills of interpreting and relating. This is a *savoir* that can facilitate bridging of cultural differences, meaning a learner's capability to decipher and establish connections between different cultural elements without the need for social interaction (Byram, 2020, p. 87-88). This *savoir* depends upon one's knowledge about other environments as much as one's own, and thus draws upon existing knowledge whether it is

attained trough formal education or by other informal means. Learners are encouraged to interpret text, events, or situations from foreign cultures by relating them to their own experiences and societal norms (Byram & Doyé, 1999, p. 142-143; Byram 2020, p. 87). This involves understanding foreign information in relation to one's own cultural context and vice versa. Byram's (2020, p. 52) learning objectives for this *savoir* aims for learners to gain the ability to

> identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins; identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present; mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena.

The third *savoir* details the skills of discovery and interaction. Byram's model describes this *savoir* as the aptitude to acquire fresh cultural knowledge during intercultural encounters (Byram, 2020, p. 88-90). In order to develop the ability needed in this savoir, Byram (2020, p. 52-53) states that the learners need the ability to: understand and explain concepts and values from different cultures, recognize and interpret cultural references, identify and navigate various communications styles, adapt their behaviour according to the cultural differences they find themselves in, understand historical and current relationships between cultures, utilize institutions that can facilitate cross-cultural contact, and mediate between interlocuters from their own culture and a foreign one. The last point requires the learner to use a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real-time interactions.

This skill of discovering develops when the learner has only partial or no existing knowledge framework. Byram (2020, p. 88) describes is as "the skill of building up specific knowledge as well as an understanding of the meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours that are inherent in a particular phenomena whether document or interactions". It entails actively engaging in interactions that lead to the discovery of new cultural facets and employing this newfound knowledge effectively during intercultural communication (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13; Byram, 2020, p. 53, 88-90). Byram links attitudes to the skill of discovery when social interactions occur as there is constraints on the time to respond to an interlocutor. The learner would then need to be sensitive in their interactions with other who might be from a radically different background where dysfunctions may arise.

Attitudes are the fourth *savoir* of intercultural competence and concerns the exhibited attitudes towards people whose cultural beliefs, meanings, values, and behaviours are perceived as different (Byram, 2020, p. 84). These attitudes are often implicitly shown trough interactions with their own social groups but can become explicit in meetings with interlocuters from other groups who are perceived to be different. This *savoir* underscores the cultivation of a mindset that is characterized by openness, curiosity, and respect towards different cultures as well as a willingness to analyse one's own beliefs, meanings, values, and behaviours from the others viewpoint (Byram, 2020, p. 84). Learners are encouraged to adopt a receptive attitude, acknowledge differences, and appreciate the nuances of cultural diversity (Byram, 2020, p. 84-85; UNESCO, 2013, p. 11).

In the *savoir* of attitudes Byram (2020, p. 50) states that among the learning objectives learners should demonstrate a willingness to engage with other people on equal terms while avoiding the pursuit of exploitation and exoticism. The learners should show interest in discovering and understanding both familiar and unfamiliar phenomena across cultures and their cultural practices, as well as a willingness to question their own cultural values and assumptions. Additionally, learners should be prepared to experience the various stages of adaptation when interacting with another culture over time and be willing to engage with the conventions and rituals of both verbal and non-verbal communication.

The questioning of one's own meanings, beliefs, values, and behaviours while respecting others is a step in challenging the ways social norms have been formed and experienced. This reflective and analytical process is a part of developing critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2020, p. 85). Byram (1997, p. 53) defines critical cultural awareness as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in our own and other cultures and countries". The *savoir* of critical cultural awareness therefore assumes an important role within Byram's model because it pertains to the educational dimensions of intercultural competence and emphasizes critical thinking and reflective evaluation of cultural values and beliefs (Byram & Doyé, 1999, p. 144; Byram, 2020, p. 90).

The objectives of this *savoir* (Byram, 2020, p. 53-54) details the learners' potential ability to identify and interpret one's own and other cultures implicit or explicit values in events and documents, conduct evaluative analysis of these documents and events using explicit criteria and perspectives, engage and mediate in intercultural exchanges based on explicit criteria as

well as negotiating acceptance as needed by using and leveraging one's own knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Byram (2012) adds that including skills, knowledge, and attitudes to both linguistic and cultural teaching, this *savoir* embodies the "educational dimensions of language teaching" which can lead to learners' actively engaging with the world and contribute to social action beyond their own country or societal groups.

These *savoirs* form a comprehensive framework that guides language educators in facilitating the development of intercultural competence among learners. The practical integration of these components can aid learners in navigating diverse cultural landscapes, and thus fostering effective communication and promoting cultural understanding within language learning contexts. These five components provide a framework in which intercultural competence can be achieved through the development of attitudes, skills, and knowledge as it pertains to one's own and other cultures and is the foundation in which the results of this study will be discussed in terms of the teachers' perspectives, reflections, and practices.

2.3   Assessment of intercultural competence

Assessment and evaluation are some of the foundational components of educational practices, yet the nuances of these terms can easily be confused (Byram, 2020). In the realm of education, assessment, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Education (Wallace, 2015, p. 17) functions as "the measurement of a learner's potential for attainment, or of their actual attainment". Evaluation, on the other hand, ventures into deeper analysis, and examines the effectiveness and value of an aspect of education by "measuring of the effectiveness of a lesson, course, or programme of study" (Wallace, 2015, p. 102). The general term assessment can be used to refer to all of the activities a teachers choose to undertake that can provide information (Black & Wiliam, 2010). This information can be used to modify teaching and learning activities and is referred to as feedback. When this feedback is used to meet learners needs by adapting the teaching methods it is called formative assessment. Formative assessment can consist of several ways of teaching as well as activities that occur within a classroom such as self- and peer assessment, goal orientation and learning strategies (Black & Wiliam, 2010).

Formative assessment strategies can help teachers to monitor student progress and identify areas where further teaching is required. In the context of teaching intercultural competence

through literature, formative assessment strategies can be used to evaluate the learners' understanding of different cultures and to identify areas where further learning is needed. Formative assessment has been shown to be an effective teaching strategy (Burner, 2019), and according to Black & Wiliam (2010), there is evidence behind formative assessment being an essential component of classroom work where raised standards of achievement are possible through its development. Research has found that there are documented learning benefits of formative assessment in foreign language contexts (Burner, 2019).

Dervin (2010) identifies various methods of assessing intercultural competence. Among them are self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment and standardized tests. Fantini (2009) adds interviews and observation to this list but emphasises that multiple methods should be used to provide a comprehensive evaluation of intercultural competence. Self-assessment can be a useful tool in assessing intercultural competence but needs to be accompanied by external assessments according to Dervin (2010). Teacher assessment can possibly provide valuable feedback, but the downside could be the teachers personal bias and may not be reliable. Standardized test may not provide a comprehensive assessment of intercultural competence and may fail to account for the many varied and diverse experiences of learners. Contextual factors such as the purpose of assessment and the cultural context are import and Fantini (2009) suggests that assessment tools should be culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and experiences of diverse learners.

Evaluating intercultural competence presents significant challenges in education (Dervin, 2010). Assessment can be described as a common yet complex practice. Sercu (2004) argues that learners prioritize what is to be assess, and thus making assessment inevitable. However, influential figures in the field – Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993), caution against assessing intercultural competence and challenge the feasibility of achieving reliability, validity, fairness, and consistency (as cited in Dervin, 2010). Various methodologies have been proposed and critiqued in attempts to gauge intercultural competence (Dervin, 2010), and a chosen few will be further explored later in this chapter.

Standard cultural tests primarily assess factual knowledge, a limitation commented on by Hashem (1995; as cited in Dervin, 2010). Critically, these tests can often oversimplify a cultures values or practices, and may reinforce cultural stereotypes, particularly in anthropological culture. Diagnostic scales constructed using Likert-type items such as those

by Fantini (2006) and Allen & Herron (2003) have faced considerable censure. Ruben (1989) questions their validity, as it is contingent on respondents' honest and accurate self-assessment capabilities. In the Norwegian upper elementary context, these diagnostic scales might not be suitable as several of the learners' maturity levels and ability to accurately assess their own acquisition of skills.

Alternative quantitative and qualitative assessment methods have been presented by scholars and practitioners within the field of intercultural competence (Dervin, 2010). Deardorff (2006) propose a diverse range of approaches encompassing case studies, interviews, narrative diary analysis, self-report instruments, observations by others or the host culture, reflective diary entries, and individual or group interviews. Byram (2005) introduces a distinctive method involving a "autobiography of intercultural experiences" that is primarily focused on problem-centered narratives highlighting differences. These efforts are however not without critique (Dervin, 2010), as Ruben (1989) scrutinizes the reliance on student diaries or logs as there might be discrepancies in learners' willingness to openly share experiences as well as doubting the honesty of the learners or the analysis of the teachers. As genuine intercultural learning often occurs through unstructured, unshared encounters (Dervin, 2010), the capture of such encounters is difficult to measure or analyze. The method of observation can face reliability issues due to the external factors influence on the subject (Gillespie & Cornish, 2009), and does not provide enough information to comprehensively assess learners' development.

What the teacher should be teaching and how this teaching is to be measured are related (Fantini, 2010). The Gemstone Model of assessment (Fantini et al., 2001, p. 101) reinforces that "assessment is not separate from but integral to every other aspect of the educational process" and all the components are connected. This model presents the educational process through the components of educational precepts, goals and objectives, curriculum/syllabus, implementation, resources, assessment, assessment (long term) and needs assessment. The intersecting lines of this models links each component with all of the others. Teachers must be competent in all of the areas mentioned in a way that enables instructional objectives and the competency to assess those objectives. Deardorff (2004, p. 324) adds several other factors aiding the quality of assessing intercultural competence that will be addressed in the next paragraph.

Firstly, it is essential to define the purpose of the assessment, meaning why an assessment is being conducted in the first place. The clarity could help align assessment strategies with the overarching instructional objectives. Next, the target audience of the assessment must be considered. Understanding who will be tested allows for the approaches to be tailored and can thus cater to specific needs or expectations. Additionally, defining clear and measurable outcomes is important. By identifying exactly what is being assessed, one can ensure that the assessments align with the desired learning objectives. The role of assessment procedure itself, and how the test is administered, evaluated, and scored can impact its validity and reliability. Moreover, attention should be given to the various aspects of the tests that are used such as their scope, efficiency, and length, as well as ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments that are employed. Furthermore, utilizing representative and varied samples of learner achievement is essential. This involves not only end-testing but also ongoing assessment in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of student progress. Lastly, a factor is mitigation bias in the assessment process. Extraneous interference that may skew results should be minimized to ensure that the assessments can yield accurate and unbiased insights into learners' competence (Deardorff, 2004, p. 324).

Fantini (2010) underscores that the purpose of assessment is the knowledge concerning how the learners obtain established learning objectives adding that newer test formats and strategies aids this process. Valued approaches in the assessment of intercultural competence incorporate logs, observation, portfolios, interviews, and performative tasks. These approaches are among those that permits monitoring and measuring the phenomenon of multidimensional assessment (Fantini, 2010).

Byram (2020, p. 172) addresses navigating through the complexities of assessing intercultural competence and/or intercultural communicative competence within an educational setting. He emphasizes that it may be difficult to separate proficiency and achievement in intercultural competence or intercultural communicative competence due to their intertwined nature, and the consequence could be that the complexity of intercultural competence may render it unable to be assessed. Kramsch (2009, p. 117-188) argues that the need to acknowledge that tests are political in nature and instead of improving tests, the focus should be in making these demands for testing visible. She states that teachers or schools should only "measure what can be legitimately measured and refuse to measure the rest, even though it is essential that we teach it" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 118). While changing assessment on the political level might not

be a big part of an ordinary teacher's day, there is room for improving the use of assessment in their work with IC in the classroom.

Byram (2020, p. 173-174) states that educational assessment of intercultural competence is achievable through the specified sub-competences or *savoirs* of intercultural competence, which then need to be "formulated as a teachable, learnable and assessable objective". Byram (2020, p. 174) has achieved the aim of his model being useful for teachers and teacher educators, despite the criticism that the sub-competencies and between intercultural competences and language competences is lacking in detail of their relationship. Details of the various savoirs have been explained earlier in this chapter and will now be expanded with how they can be assessed in an educational context trough Byram's reflections.

The multifaceted nature of intercultural competence necessitates a comprehensive approach that encompasses attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Beginning with attitudes where learners are encouraged to cultivate curiosity and openness as it is crucial for navigating diverse cultural perspectives where the objective is the "interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices" (Byram, 2020, p. 174). The evidence of attaining this objective would be based on actions that demonstrate the learner's priorities based on their own reflection rather than them simply stating their priorities and the assessment should take this into consideration Byram, 2020, p. 175). Using Byram's (2020, p. 50) learning objectives for the savoir of attitudes could be helpful in assessing the learners' ability to for example question their own culture's values in an interaction with another culture, but the interpretation of this ability is then up to the teacher's subjective opinion.

Moving on to knowledge where there is an emphasis placed on understanding social dynamics, ways of communicating and knowing some underlying causes of when and why intercultural misunderstandings occur. The objective in process of attaining this knowledge is formulated thusly by Byram (2020, p. 175): "knowledge of the types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins". Often, examples are drawn on when teaching and assessing this *savoir* such as learners being asked to analyze video clips or conversations where they can demonstrate their knowledge trough recognition and explanations of what goes on in a specific instance of language use (Byram, 2020, p. 175).

Assessment of the savoirs of knowledge and skills of interpreting and relating are interrelated as the latter is depended upon the first. Skills of interpreting and relating is based on the ability to interpret various documents or events from other cultures and mediating conflicting perspectives (Byram, 2020, p. 176). The methods suggested to assess this *savoir* encompasses real-time interactions and mediation in the written form. Connecting the *savoir* of knowledge and skill with the *savoir* of skills of discovery and interaction can be assessed in the real-time interactions as the latter has the objective of teaching the learner the ability to "elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and to develop an exploratory system susceptible of application to other phenomena" (Byram, 2020, p. 177). In other words, the intercultural learner can use various techniques of questioning informants or other sources to gain information and develop and test generalisations on their shared meaning and values, and followingly establish links and relationships among these. Assessment strategies here can involve probing questioning technique, reflective practices, as well as the cultivation of self-awareness that is documented through portfolios or experiential learning (Byram, 2020, p. 177).

Finally, Byram (2020, p.178) states that the objective of the *savoir* of critical cultural awareness in an educational setting is to attain "the ability to interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes". Critical cultural awareness is a cornerstone of intercultural competence and necessitates an evaluation of cultural perspectives and practices. Assessment of this *savoir* revolves around evaluating the efficacy of communication, analyzing interactions, and reflecting on ideological perspectives and conflicts trough "testing which asks for commentary, analysis and the learners' retrospective and self-analytical accounts of their interactions (Byram, 2020, p. 178). Observable and assessable evidence can thus be provided through the learners thinking and response to the experience.

In summary, the assessment of intercultural competence demands a multifaceted approach that integrates attitudes, knowledge, and skills in the classroom to enable the fostering of a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics and enhance intercultural communication proficiency.

2.4 Teaching intercultural competence

Norwegian English teachers in upper primary and their possible influence on their learners' development of intercultural competence is central to this thesis. Their choices when working with intercultural competence are essential for learners' attainment of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary as stated trough the English subject curriculum aims (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). The pedagogical teaching of intercultural competence is complicated because there is quite a difference between knowing the framework's components well in theory versus performing the actual teaching of it to learners and helping them in their development of intercultural competence. A sample of research and theory on strategies and teaching approaches conducive for this aim will be presented in this sub chapter.

2.4.1 Teaching methods

This section will not be focusing on existing specific learning activities due the limitations of this thesis, it will instead attempt to present various approaches and framework relating to the teaching of intercultural competence. Byram (2020) critiques the traditional approaches to cultural educating where he notes that there is a predominant focus on factual knowledge about other cultures at the expense of language acquisition. A need for a balanced approach which integrates language learning and cultural understanding is emphasized. By incorporating cultural beliefs and behaviours into language learning, Byram and Doyé (1999) highlight the necessity for learners to be able to adapt their language use to various cultural contexts. Their approach focuses on teaching intercultural competence in the English subject in a way that cultivates both cultural awareness and linguistic proficiency.

Effective methods for teaching intercultural competence can play an important role in the learners' development. Byram et al. (2002) advocate for activities that promote discussions and critical thinking that can enable learners to engage with diverse viewpoints and analyze cultural perspectives. Lund and Villanueva (2020) encourage teachers to create a learning environment with the ability to engage their learners' curiosity, openness, and active participation in cultural exploration. Liddicoat and Scarina (2013) suggest a cyclical approach to intercultural learning that emphasizes the processes of observation, reflection, and interaction. This approach aims to facilitate learners' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives and enhances their communicative skills in an intercultural context.

Dypedahl & Lund (2020, p. 22) suggests that teachers should focus on the development of intercultural competence through its central components (see 2.2). They propose basing lessons plans and learning objectives on these components where the end-goal might be for learners to describe what respect entails and how showing respect in intercultural communication can help them in building relationships. Deardorff (2015) supports the suggestion of carrying out activities that can address relevant real-life interactions that the learners have or are likely to experience (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 22).

Deardorff (2009) proposed a tool for developing intercultural competence called the Observe, State, Explain and Explore (OSEE). Beginning with the key starting point and an essential skill is the basics of observing and listing there the focus in concentrated on being aware of what occurs in intercultural situations. Deardorff (2009) proposes practicing with viewing brief clips of film and writing about them so practice the development of making objective statements. Moving on to the next step where the exploration of different explanations addresses the skill and understanding necessary to see from others' perspectives and allow one's initial assumptions caused by cultural or personal reasons to be left behind. The last step is the most challenging one, where learners are to evaluate which explanations for a situation is most likely. Deardorff (2009) suggests strategies for this step and includes the asking of further questions and the collecting of information through these conversations. When following this tool and its steps, Deardorff (2009) argues that it can enable learners' in viewing behaviours in a more objective way, and thus learners will have achieved a measure of intercultural competence.

Carlsen (2020, p. 41-54) works with multilingualism and intercultural competence and proposes visualising diversity to signal an inclusive attitude, using language hierarchies to work with cultural influence and respect for varieties in language. Language biographies can utilise the learner's description of and reflections on their own language learning experiences. Detective exercises are suggested to activate learners' language skills and learning strategies, while poetry is proposed as a good starting point for exploring language and identity and identity texts as a way of promoting understanding and respect for diversity while working with identity. Carlsen's (2020, p. 55) examples of working with activities focuses on multilingualism to suggests ways in which Norwegian teachers can work with the new curriculum.

Dypedahl (2020, p. 60) links knowledge about cultures and societies to intercultural learning but clarifies that "students do not *automatically* become interculturally competent by learning facts about societies in the English-speaking world". He advocates for working with intercultural topics such as communication patterns, various mindsets, shifting of perspectives and reflection in combination with cultural topics. With a culture-specific approach, Dypedahl (2020, p. 62) aims for learners to understand diversity, develop cultural empathy and deep learning with a social context or society as a case study. He states that by examining a group of people and a context in depth, learners can more easily understand the diversity and complexity of any group of people regarding culture (2020, p. 67). This could also be a method of decentralising learners' perspective when learning how the world looks from someone else's viewpoint.

2.4.2   Text selection

The selection of instructional materials plays a role in fostering intercultural competence and authentic English texts can offer rich cultural insights and linguistic diversity (Ciornei & Dina, 2015) as they are produced for, and by, native English speakers. Bland (2020) advocates for the inclusion of authentic materials that reflect diverse cultural perspectives and argues for exposure to a broader range of English-speaking cultures beyond the traditional focus on the BANA countries: Britain, Australia, and North America (Holliday, 1994, p. 3, cited in Bland, 2020, p. 70). Bland (2020, p. 71) suggests using a variety of storyworlds where different lives are in focus while using literary text help learners discover divergent histories to exercise the intercultural competence of changing their perspective. He continues to argue that "one of the ways of avoiding reductive, one-sidedly stereotyped topics" in the classroom is carefully chosen literature for children that can be thoroughly discussed (Bland, 2020, p. 86).

According to Davcheva and Sercu (2005, p. 90) textbooks are used as a guiding principle for many who teach foreign languages. They argue that textbooks can provide guidance at the beginners' level concerning grammatical and lexical progression. In relation to the context of this thesis, they suggest that textbooks are inadequate in their addressing and presenting multiple sides of any issues and can present only fragmented parts of foreign cultures while promoting stereotypical "tourist views on the target people" (Davcheva & Sercu, 2005, p. 90).

Burwitz-Meltzer (2001) suggests that fictional texts can provide learners with subjective insights into different cultures while encouraging empathy and a broadening of their cultural awareness. Additionally, the integration of factual information such as countries, customs and lifestyles can enhance learners' intercultural understanding (Byram et al., 2002).

2.4.3   Teacher cognition

The teachers themselves are also an important influence on their learners' development of intercultural competence, not only by the resources they choose to teach. The teacher's cognition, meaning their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes, can significantly influence their instructional decisions and practices (Borg, 2003). The teachers' perceptions can shape how they interpret new experiences and make pedagogical decisions. Haukås (2018) emphasizes the importance of teachers being aware of their own beliefs to facilitate changes in their approaches to teaching. This awareness is achievable trough self-reflection and in engaging in discussions with others to gain a fresh perspective and new insights (Haukås, 2018, p. 344). Teachers play an important role in facilitating intercultural learning experiences which align with the goals of the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019) and can foster learners' intercultural competence (Barnard & Burns, 2012).

Teaching intercultural competence in the English subject requires teachers to use a multifaceted approach that can integrate language learning, cultural exploration, and critical reflection. By employing teaching strategies that are effective and by using diverse and varied instructional choices the teachers can nurture their learners intercultural understanding and help prepare them for meaningful interactions in an increasingly globalized world.

2.5   Previous research

In this sub-chapter, I will primarily present published research on the subject of teacher practices on intercultural competence and assessment in the EFL context. A couple of relevant master theses are also included. Since quite a bit of research has been conducted within the realm of the practices of teaching intercultural competence in schools in various contexts and levels, those conducted in a Norwegian context will be included as it is relevant to this thesis

as well as those who's contexts concern this topic. A few studies from other contexts are included on the subject of assessment because of the lack of Norwegian studies.

Listuen (2017) explored the examination and scrutinized cultural teaching within the English subject across two Norwegian lower secondary schools by employing a combination of videotaped English lessons and teacher interviews (p. 6). Her inquiry aimed to discern the content taught by teachers, the motivations for incorporating cultural elements and their instructional approaches (Listuen 2017, p. 6). The finding of this inquiry revealed that the predominant instructional resources used in these English lessons were authentic, and were primarily focused on what Kramsch (2006, cited in Listuen, 2017, p. 12) termed "big-c culture", encompassing arts, literature, history, and national institutions. Listuen (2017, p. 83) noted that the instructional objectives primarily aimed at enhancing learners' general knowledge rather than fostering communication skills or understanding diverse ways of life.

Parallel to Listuen's exploration, Skaugen (2020) embarked on a similar journey, focusing on the teaching of intercultural competence within the English subject at the lower secondary level in Norway. Drawing from the LISA project, Skaugen analysed videotaped instructional material to examine the presence of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to intercultural competence (Skaugen, 2020, p. 23-24). Her aim was to discern how knowledge, skills, and attitudes manifested in lessons to cultivate learners' intercultural competence. The findings indicated an inclusion of knowledge and skills, particularly those related to acquiring and applying knowledge. However, Skaugen (2020, p. 64) observed an absence of explicit attention to attitudes in the observed teaching instances, despite it being a significant component of intercultural competence (Byram, 2020).

Vesterås (2022, p. 9) master thesis aimed to examine how Norwegian upper primary English teachers practice their teaching of intercultural competence. This project found that the teachers' understanding of intercultural competence aligned with both theoretical constructs and curriculum guidelines (Vesterås, 2022, p. 90). These teachers prioritized communicative skills and focused on sociolinguistic and discourse competencies. However, explicit attention to attitudes was lacking, despite their recognition of the significance of openness and curiosity in fostering critical cultural awareness (Vesterås, 2022, p. 91). In terms of instructional resources, authentic English texts were utilized to provide diverse cultural perspectives while textbooks were seldomly used (Vesterås, 2022, p. 92). Regarding instructional activities, the

teachers leaned towards teacher-centered approaches but endeavoured to include reflective discussions and varied tasks to enhance learners' skills. Although the teachers used a mix of activities, the reflective and creative tasks were emphasized to connect content to intercultural competence (Vesterås, 2022, p. 92-93).

Heggernes (2019, p. 37) aimed to explore how an understanding of dialogic components might cultivate learners' intercultural competence. This study reveals how dialogic features, such as invitations to provoke thoughtful responses and a respectful exploration of conflicting ideas, can facilitate learners' engagement and mediate their development of intercultural competence. Heggernes (2019, p. 54-56) concludes that teachers' intercultural competence is of importance to mediate dialogues effectively. This includes the teachers' ability to provide open-ended activities and create an environment that encourages its learners to engage, collaborate and actively participate. This study gives information on how authentic texts can nurture learners' intercultural competence. When facilitated effectively, these texts enable learners to engage in meaningful interactions, thoughtful responses, exchanging ideas and perspectives.

As commented on in the chapter concerning the teaching of intercultural competence, Davcheva and Sercu (2005, p. 90, 106) research results found a majority of the included teachers used textbooks in their language teaching despite the freedom to choose the resources that they use in their lessons. In the same study, they argue that the textbooks way of teaching about culture is stereotypic.

In researching the use of authentic texts in academic settings, Ciornei and Dina, (2015, p. 278) their results showed improved communication and cultural knowledge through the use of authentic texts. They define authentic texts as "a text that was created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produces (Little & Singleton, 1988, p. 21 as references in Ciornei & Dina, 2015). In the context of EFL teaching, the teacher can help develop their learners' skills in language and cross-cultural knowledge and understanding through the use of authentic texts. In an article published in 2015, Ciornei and Dina explored the types of text that are conducive to academic performance. Their findings show articles, interviews, songs, documentaries and shows as the most beneficial. An analysis of school documents revealed that 58% of learners improved their language fluency as well as comprehension, underscoring the efficacy of authentic texts role in enhancing language skills.

Lund's (2007) dissertation concerned questions of how context and culture were dealt with in English textbooks in Norway. Her reasoning behind this research were based on the fact that textbooks are a key tool in Norwegian foreign language classrooms (Lund, 2007, p. 43). Lund's (2007, p. 329-330) results showed potential for intercultural learning through the LK97 textbooks, but the prevailing sentiment suggests that the textbooks were lacking in their engagement with shaping learners' attitudes towards diverse cultures or the fostering of a critically evaluating their own cultural perspectives. She advocates for avoiding "presenting general Western contexts and perspectives as if they were universally valid" (Lund, 2007, p. 330), and promotes teaching of aspects of cultural context that are specific while also emphasizing the diversity of both their own culture as well as foreign ones.

Bandura and Sercu (2005, p. 83) highlight the contradiction between teachers' instructional practices and the theory prescribed to develop learners' intercultural competence. Their study reveals that learner-centered activities are most effective in the fostering of intercultural skills, yet results show that teacher predominantly use teacher-centered approaches in which the teacher dictates the cultural content and interactions. Additionally, the study revealed that classroom discussions mainly revolve around comparing different cultures in their everyday aspects such as lifestyles, food habits and routines, with less focus on ethnical and social groups (Bandura & Sercu, 2005, p. 85). Interestingly, topics such as traditions and youth culture are prioritized, indicating a narrower focus on the diversity of different cultures. Consequently, opportunities for the learners to engage in activities that are reflective, explore other foreign cultures and empathize with others are infrequent (Bandura & Sercu, 2005, p. 85).

A report from the European Commission (Shuali et al., 2020) addresses the educational needs of teachers in the European Union in the context of inclusive education in relation to diversity. It provides teachers with guidelines for assessment and training practices for democratic and intercultural competence. This report builds on previous steps of the project and provides concrete recommendations with examples from the analysis of 21 innovative cases that can contribute to teachers' intercultural and democratic competence. It invites Member States of the European Union to "promote active citizenship to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes and social, citizenship and intercultural competences" in addition to enabling staff in education to "promote common values through initial and continued

education" (Shuali et al., 2020). The implementation guidelines for an "effective initial teacher education curricula" (Shuali et al., 2020, p. 34-38) provides examples regarding setting up the conditions for and help during implementation. In setting up teachers' education curricula, social theories' related knowledge should be included, as well as designing training courses and provide pre-service teachers with learning situations that empower them to take leadership of promoting justice and equity when they begin their careers as teachers. During implementation the guidelines advocate for teaching social justice and enhance critical reflection, self-reflection and critical understanding of identities and sociocultural contexts.

3   METHOD

This chapter will present and detail the research design for this thesis and the basis of methodological considerations taken throughout the research process. The following sub chapters will describe the research design and method for data collection, before delving into the selection of participants and the data analysis process. Lastly, there will be a discussion on the reliability and validity of this study as well as the ethical considerations central to this research process.

3.1   Research design

Since this thesis aims to explore the reflections, perspectives, practices, and experiences of Norwegian teachers in upper primary concerning the teaching of, and the assessment practices, within the scope of intercultural competence in the English subject it is necessary to choose a design that enables the gathering of such information. With this in mind, I have chosen to conduct a qualitative research project on the basis that it can provide this thesis with a deeper understanding of the phenomenon I am researching (Kvarv, 2014, p. 137). In choosing my qualitative approach I wanted to see if there was the possibility of collecting more detailed data on my subject through a semi-structured focus-group interview.

A semi-structured interview as a method can allow for the gathering of numerous experiences, variations and attitudes that are relevant for this thesis. Since the subject and research questions for this thesis is based on teachers themselves, this qualitative approach allows for the opportunity to explore teachers' individual thoughts, perceptions, and reflexions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A focus group interview can provide reflections within the group itself and can be deeper and richer as opposed to one-on-one interviews (Thomas et al., 1995; Vaughn et al., 1996). It is important to keep in mind that there is a possibility of ambiguity in how the participants answer the questions as well as how the researcher interprets the answer as qualitative interviews can be sensitive to the nuances of interpretation and meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 48, 64).

One of the advantages of a focus group interview is that it can allow for a more spontaneous conversation where the participants can build upon each other's comments and compare their personal experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 41). It can potentially relax the participants

when the atmosphere is more natural, and useful information can be collected when the participants take the discussion to a possibly new and deeper level. A disadvantage is that these kinds of conversations can be lengthy, and additionally might veer off course form the original topic of discussion which is central to the research (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 41). As will be discussed during the pilot stage of this chapter, the interviewer's job as a mediator will be important to steer the conversation in a way that allows for relevant data collection. The interviewer would need to continuously balance the possibilities of a relevant new and deeper level of discussion with a conversation that might not be related to the research at hand.

Other disadvantages, or weaknesses, in conducting focus group interviews concern the personalities of the participants and how their dynamic, and power structures might impact the conversation. If one of the participants are shy and the others are more outgoing, the natural dynamic could possibly be excluding the thoughts and opinions of the shy one. The possibility of one person in the group taking over the conversation, often unconsciously, is a factor that can also impact the group dynamic and the results. In mediating these concerns, the interviewer would need to actively encourage the participants who are less engaged and allow them space to contribute to the conversation in addition to limiting the responses of those who are taking up others space. Beforehand, the interviewer should take notice of possible power structures existing between the participants if one for example is the team leader of another and consider the implications and consequences this dynamic might have on the participants. As will be reiterated later in this chapter as well, the interviewer needs to mediate the conversation, and make sure that the participants have an equal chance to contribute to the discussion.

3.2   Interview procedure and data collections

The phase of designing the interview guide (Appendix 1) was extensive. Editing and finalizing the research questions were imperative as they build the foundation for the interview questions whose purpose is extrapolating information relating to the research questions which are based of the theoretical framework and previous research. The interview guides intention is to gather area-specific information from all the interviewees. Since the interview is semi-structured, this guide can then provide a focus to the conversation, but still allow for adaptability and freedom for the participants to explain their choices and reflections.

The structure can also give further information on what areas within the focus the participants consider important and allows for attaining information beyond the predictions in the pre-interview of this thesis.

The questions in the interview guide were prepared with the intention to let Norwegian teachers in upper elementary to share, explain, and reflect on their teaching of intercultural competence in the English classroom. It will also provide a look into their perceptions on their normal planning of English classes as it relates to intercultural competence and how they themselves, consciously or unconsciously, promote this framework in their classroom. The questions are attempted to be phrased in a way that can possibly make the participants want to open up and share their knowledge and reflections on the subject (Dalen 2011, p. 27).

3.3   Sample

This subchapter will detail information relating to the initial plan for sampling participant and sample process, finding participants and the information surrounding the participants such as confidentiality and informed consent.

3.3.1   Sample process

In order to answer the stated research questions for this thesis, I chose to contact teachers that are experienced English teachers in the upper primary level, meaning that they have experience in teaching years 5-7 and formally qualified with a minimum of 30 credits in the English subject. Experienced upper primary teachers were preferable for this interview as I wanted to gain as much information as possible concerning their thoughts on their own practices with intercultural competence as teachers who did not recently finish their teaching education with a focus on the new curriculum. A thought was also given to laying the groundwork as to minimize the difference in power dynamics, as new teachers might feel less confident in their abilities as opposed to experienced teachers, which could affect their contribution to the conversation. It would have been interesting to involve a recent graduate to explore any differences between their teacher education on different curriculums, but this was unfortunately not possible due to a lack of such a participant trough my search.

3.3.2   Convenience sample

In this thesis the sample of participants consists of three English teachers with at least 30 credits in English as a part of their educational background. These were all recruited trough my personal network. All the participants have taught English in upper primary within the last year, where two are currently teaching in Years 5 and 6 and the last participants have gone from teaching in Year 7 last year to Year 4 this year. They all have an extensive background as teachers with more than eight years of experience individually. All of the teachers who participated in the focus group interview were female as there were no willing male participants to include. The male to female ratio makes this research not representative for the male perspective. All the participants are teaching at the same school, with two of the participants having worked together on a team in the past five years. The reasoning behind selecting participants from the same school is mostly one of convenience since the method chosen for this thesis is a focus group interview. To gather participants with varying and busy schedules at the same time proved to be difficult as extenuating circumstances got in the way of performing the interview when it was initially scheduled.

This way of sampling participants can be a hinder to explore various teaching methods in different schools which is often preferable when conducting qualitative interviews. However, since the chosen method for this thesis is a focus group interview, the participants knowing each other or being somewhat familiar can mean that the setting would help the teachers be more comfortable in talking to both the interviewer and the other interviewees (Richardson & Rabiee, 2001).

The choice of interviewing the participants in Norwegian were based on a few assumptions. Primarily, the assumption that the participant would be more comfortable in a focus group setting where they could speak their mother tongue. Secondly, that the teachers' metalanguage surrounding their didactical choices and reflections in their primary language would be more conducive to gaining detailed information. Therefore, the focus-group interview was conducted in Norwegian, and I will be providing translations of their contributions in the chapter concerning the results attained. My translation of their contribution tries to be as true to the original statements as possible without missing key information that could be lost with a literal translation from Norwegian to English.

Table 1: Overview of participants

Informant	English credits	Teaching experience (years)	Current year
T-A	60	7	4
T-B	60	7	6
T-C	60	20	5

3.4 Informed consent and confidentiality

Before I could begin approaching teachers and conducting a focus-group interview, the research design needed to be approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT). Since the main collection of data in this research will come from an audio recording of the interview, it necessitates a thoroughly constructed plan around preserving the participants identifying information. Both their voices and personal information can be used to identify the contributing teachers, and SIKT's approval of my application (see Appendix 2) is crucial to preserve the participants anonymity so that the risk of them being identified and experiencing negative consequences are as minimal as possible (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, s. 107). My application was approved, but SIKT advised changes to the participants invitation (see Appendix 3) which were made to ensure the participant had the necessary information before agreeing to be a part of this research. To prevent the disclosure of any names, the participants of this research project are named teacher A, B, and C.

After receiving approval from SIKT, I began crafting an informational document (see appendix 3) to be given to prospective participants. As informed consent is a necessary part of conducting research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 104), the provided information in this document detailed general information about the project and its aims, how the interview would be conducted as well as providing the participants with information on their rights should they choose to contribute. They were also afforded the opportunity to ask questions and to think it over. After reviewing this document, the participants were asked to sign a consent form attached to the main document in order to gain their consent in the use of their

contributions to this research project. All three of the participants signed the consent form before the collection of data begun. They were all informed on their right to anonymity and their right to retract their consent in participating regardless of the timeline before the focus group interview was conducted.

3.5   Pilot test and interview execution

Conducting a pilot test for the proposed focus group interview began as a step towards refining the interview guide (see appendix 1) as I found the process of editing the questions verbiage to maximize the possible gains in accordance with the research questions quite challenging. This preliminary test would then allow for a rehearsal of the actual interview and help me gauge the relevance, clarity, and effectiveness of the questions in eliciting relevant responses from participants. The pilot test also allowed for me as the facilitator of the interview to rehearse and be mindful of the choices, changes and follow-up questions that could possibly occur during the data collection interview. Serving as the interviewer during the pilot test could offer insights into some potential challenges that might occur during the main interview.

For the pilot test I approached four of my fellow master students with experience in teaching Years 4-7, praxis notwithstanding. Three of those had the time and opportunity so agreed to participate in my pilot. Reflections after the pilot test enabled a critical evaluation of my performance in the areas of how I relayed questions, answered the interviewees questions during, and possible follow-up questions needing to be included in the main interview document. After reviewing notes from the pilot test and the reflections surrounding the verbiage of some of the questions, changes were made to a few of them to allow for more clarity and openness. The preparations before the actual focus-group interview had a focus of enabling each participant to contribute as much as they were comfortable, and facilitating a discussing that involves all three of the participants that resembles an equal balance among them.

Making sure that each person was comfortable contributing their thoughts and reflections were a key point in the pilot test as my role as the interviewer is to mediate. After conducting the pilot test, my reflections concerned the difficulty in fulfilling this role. At times it was challenging to let the conversation naturally include those who generally are quieter so they

could participate equally. These situations were mainly caused by the other participants who were highly engaged and had a lot of contributing thoughts. This balancing act was at the forefront of my mind when the actual interview was conducted. Other reflections concerned how the questions were asked, and the emphasis put on the various concepts if or when the conversation veered off course. Mediating the conversation in a way that allows relevant information to be gained without unnecessary information taking up space was a learning curve in that it took a while to steer the conversation back to its original point. This allowed me to practice mediating in a group setting. I asked the participants how they experienced my involvement and gained a tip from one of the pilot participants who had feedback on my timing in trying to steer the conversation back from an unrelated tangent.

As the time for the actual focus group interviewed neared, these reflections were a key part of preparations. For the interview, I had help in booking a conference room at the school the teachers worked at so that there were no interruptions during. The interview was conducted 15 minutes after their lessons were done to allow for a bite to eat or other necessities. Ideally, we would have conducted the interview earlier in the workday so that the teachers were fresh and not tired from teaching, but schedule difficulties would not allow for this. I greeted them in the conference room as I was there earlier to see if the room needed airing out and two of the participants and I small talked for about ten minutes as one of the participants had to handle a work-related issue before joining us. The interview itself lasted 47 minutes, and we ended the conversation with a few minutes of small talk before the teachers continued with their day and I could look over my notes and start the process of analysing the gathered data. The next chapter will detail this process.

3.6   Data analysis approach

A focus group interview with four people provides a large and comprehensive amount of data to analyze. A vast transcript with four different voices to distinguish in addition to notes taken during and after the interview needs to be structured to help the researcher in the process of extracting relevant information to answer the research questions. The most common form of data analysis is the use of categorization where the aim is to "capture the structured experiences and actions" through the development of categorizations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 226). This thesis will base its approach on Krueger & Casey's (2014, p. 138-139) systemic analysis that inhabits the qualities ensuring that the data analysis is systematic,

verifiable, sequential, and consequential. Systematic analysis help ensure that the findings from the interviews reflect the contributions of the participants and can help avoid mistakes or overlooking factors that might be critical to the results (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 139).

Krueger and Casey's (2014, p. 143-155) analytical process will now be summarized by the steps before the data analysis itself. The first two steps are the starting points for the process of analysis and begins with "deciding who will coordinate the analysis". Since this thesis is conducted by only one researcher the first step is easily implemented. The second step involves looking over the research questions and "specifically think about analysis" where one in the stage of preparing for interviews are editing research and interview questions. It also involves thinking of how the participants will influence each other and how word choices and precise language can affect the data one is gathering. The third step concerns anticipating the discussion and testing out the questions and situations beforehand in a pilot-test.

The fourth step advises to "use multiple strategies for data capture" (p. 143), meaning preparing for how one is to record the data contributed by the participants and having all necessary equipment ready before the interview. The next steps involve would in this case involve an external note taker and the consideration they make when taking notes as well as identifying situations that would need further exploration. The seventh step concerns a debrief soon after the interview, and in my case that means writing down any thoughts or reflections I had. Following is the step where data is organized immediately after the debrief and then comes the decision to transcribe or not. I decided to prepare a full transcript and used the services of the application Nettskjema to transcribe the interview for me as I followed along with the audio file and corrected the mistakes or misunderstanding made by the application.

The coding process begun with the task of sorting the relevant comments into categories that are similar. The analysis of data is based on the technique called constant comparative method and is based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) work (as cited in Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 147). This technique aims to "identify patterns in the data and discover relationships among ideas or concepts" and relates to this thesis because by comparing one segment of data from one participant with another to identify their similarities and differences allows for a detailed look into the teachers' perspectives and reflections on intercultural competence in the English classroom (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 156).

This process examines each response to a question and gives it a code, and this continues until all the data are exhausted before moving on to the next question. When using this strategy for analyzing the collected data the next step is to think through the statements made in the context of frequency, extensiveness, intensity, specificity, internal consistency, and the participants perception of importance (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 147) before writing a report on the findings which in this case means the next chapter concerning the results from this research.

3.7   Reliability

Reliability in research terms refer to research that can be replicated, meaning re-tested, and ending up with the same results as the original research (Holand, 2018, p. 19). In qualitative studies there are some difficulties in producing the same results with a re-test because the people who are interviewed will most likely have a varying degree of difference in their answers due to their own personal differences (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 223). This does not mean that replication of qualitative studies is impossible, and this thesis aim is to produce a research design that is possible to replicate at a later date. By creating objective research questions that are mostly open-ended follows the principles of a semi-structured interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 46, and following a methodological approach to data analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 147-156) this thesis strives to attain reliability. It is important to note that since the interview is semi-structured, the facilitator can ask follow-up questions that would not be included in the guide, and both interviewer and interviewee can provide insights and comment beyond the scope of the question.

The pilot test allowed for the refining of questions asked, and by improving facilitation skills in an interview the researcher can minimize the effects of the participants on venturing into other pastures not relative to the questions and thus ensure better consistency in the data collection process. Consistency is important as well as mitigating the risk of participants answering questions based on what they imagine the researcher wants to hear. In the scope of focus group interviews this can be an added challenge because they are interviewed in a group with their peers, and they might not let on what their actual praxis looks like to fit in with the group's general consensus on a subject matter. This factor is not possible to control for the interviewer and the interrelationship between the participants and facilitator can be affected by age, gender, voice, or other factors.

3.8 Validity

In the context of this thesis the research design and the completion of the research is not sufficient in sample size to enable generalization for all Norwegian upper primary teachers of English. The data emerging from this thesis can provide information on how a group of teachers think, reflect on, and use both teaching and assessment of intercultural competence in their pedagogical approach in a classroom. As all teachers in Norway follow the same curriculum and competence aims, there is room for assuming that the results are not a statistical anomaly and can reflect some of the pedagogical practices of teachers in this specific context.

3.9 Ethical considerations

During the process of writing this master thesis, several ethical considerations have been taken into account. This sub-chapter will summarize how informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the researcher's role have impacted this thesis as these are four areas of ethical consideration according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, p. 104-110).

In order to prevent the participant to experience negative consequences for their contribution to this research project, the confidentiality and the informed consent has been detailed (see chapter 3.4) and should mitigate the risks of such incidents. The focus group interview itself was recorded by using the application *Nettskjema* to make sure the data was handled in a confidential way, and the participants will continuously only be referenced to as A, B, C or D.

As this project's only researcher, the choices I make are important. The ethical considerations I have made are based on research and my own moral and ethical responsibilities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 108). Since the focus of this thesis is the pedagogical concerns of teachers, the main considerations concern them. Providing the participant of this study with information about their rights, and how I would process their contributions are essential to these considerations (see chapter 3.4). My contribution as a facilitator also necessitates ethical considerations during the interview itself when balancing the conversation so that they all can share their thoughts and gathering this information as well as making sure the group dynamic and situation is comfortable for all the participants.

4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter will present the results from the data analysis that is generated through the transcript from the interviews of teachers in upper elementary. The results below are presented through codes based on the constant comparison method with examples from all of the teachers and organised according to the stated questions from the interview guide (see Appendix, 3). I make it a point to distinguish each teacher because a focus group interview can appear unorganized. Since this analysis is based on a conversation, reactions such as nodding, and words of agreement will be highlighted through the presentation of analysis since a repetition of what other participants have said may seem redundant. Field notes will be included when appropriate throughout the presentation of results to indicate agreement or disagreement. If there is information lacking, that is because of the structure of the interview where the conversation veered into other aspects that is deemed irrelevant for this thesis or the teachers did not have any specific information to contribute. All quotes from this section are translated by me, as the interviews were conducted in Norwegian.

4.1 English subject's role

The first question the teachers were asked after providing information on their level of education and experience was how they see the role of the English subject in a world that is increasingly more globalized. All of the teachers stated that they thought of the English language as an important part of preparing their learners to become participating adults in the world both in and outside of Norway. In their answers to this question the teachers focused more on how globalisation affects their classroom and communication within the class itself with all the diversity they experience with their own learners. Teacher A states: "English is the greatest common language we have because many at this school usually have a second or third language as well". Teacher B continues the conversation with "we have kids from all over the world joining us with their own background, their own knowledge and presuppositions" and follows up with the notion that "English can be a link between the kids". Teacher C nods along with what the other participants are saying, signalling agreement, and continues the reflection with "for many, it's a third language, and in my experience of those that do not feel secure in their Norwegian language, almost seem more safe or comfortable speaking English". Teacher A sums up their thoughts succinctly when referring to English as

The biggest common language we have. So, I think it is a very important tool in communication. It is becoming increasingly important that we, the teachers, and kids are proficient in using the English language.

4.2 Definition

In order for the discussion of intercultural competence to be productive, I wanted to establish a baseline for how the participants in the interview understood the term. In my preparations for the interviews and in casual conversation with other elementary teachers when asked about what I was writing my master thesis in, most had not previously heard of the term and asked for a clarification on what it meant. Several could deduce the meaning from the word itself, but needed further information on what exactly it entails. Therefore, I asked the participants the question "how do you understand the term 'intercultural competence'?" in order to gain information on what they believe the term means and how they conceptually understand it.

The results indicate a common perception of intercultural competence as knowledge about other cultures, openness, and the language needed to interact and show respect to others from a different culture. Teacher A mentions the need for "competence about other cultures, religions and traditions" in the Norwegian classroom as they perceive today's classroom to be increasingly multicultural. This is supported by teacher B's perspective where the learners should gain "competence about culture, I mean about the whole world and being able to take advantage of it". They refer to intercultural competence as "a key or tool to learn more about others". Teacher B draws respect into their definition of intercultural competence, stating "respect is an important aspect" with teacher C adding "it's about learning more and gaining respect for other people". They continue with referencing knowledge about other cultures as it "will help the learners develop respect for other people".

Next, the teachers were asked what knowledge or skills they deemed relevant for learners to develop intercultural competence. I have divided their answers into the sub-headings of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to separate the results in a succinct manner.

4.3   Knowledge

The teachers all agree that acquiring knowledge about other cultures is an important step in their learners' process of developing intercultural competence. Their answers are varying in the sense of their reflections on what that knowledge should entail. Teacher A specifically mentions knowledge about other "cultures, religions and traditions" in their answer. Teacher B widens this notion to knowledge "about the whole world" to enable the learners to navigate meeting other cultures and people than their own. They continue with including "history, geography and social sciences" as important parts of gaining knowledge relevant to intercultural competence. Teacher C supports the notion of knowledge about the "whole world" by stating "the English world is so wide, and intercultural competence comes into it when you look not only to England, but everywhere else". They specify and exemplify this view on knowledge related to intercultural competence when talking about their most recent classroom experience: "recognizing and talking about various English pronunciation with the kids to show that this is also a part of diversity".

Teacher C draws on their experience within the topic of the diversity of English pronunciation and exemplifies how they use knowledge as a starting point for further reflection:

> Right now, we are working on the cross-curricular subject of Africa, and the kids were perplexed that they spoke English in that part of the world. Building on this knowledge, we have moved on to learn about colonization, why there are so many people in the world speaking English and continuing on to racism, colonies, and slaves.

In the above quote, teacher C also touches on learning knowledge about the English language itself, and later references teaching their learners about phrases or words distinctive to parts of South Africa. This drove the conversation on to learning the English language as a necessity to communicate, and how there are variations of words in English only used in certain places. Teacher A stress that their learners need to be able "know enough English words and being able to put them into coherent sentences" in order to communicate at all with other English-speaking people regardless of their culture of origin. Teacher B stress the importance of how their learners' "language competence need to be developed" in order to sustain their discussions about various aspects of culture.

The early stages of their English lessons focused quite a bit on learning the vocabulary needed to understand a text or a concept to make sure that all of their learners were on "somewhat the same page about what we are learning". Teacher A then speaks on how important it is to have a "somewhat common foundation of references" while referring to a project their class did on international folk and fairy tales and how they are similar or different from their own experiences. Teacher A talked about how many of their learners' recognized storylines from their own upbringing, and there were several of the learners who knew different variations of the same stories which led to a "great class discussion on the aspects that they recognized and were surprised at the similarities of the stories from the other side of the world".

In the subchapter about knowledge (see 4.3), the topic of cross-curricular work was mentioned when the teachers and learners are working with intercultural competence. Teacher B explains that "it is very natural to include in all subjects because of the learners in our class, in order to show understanding and acknowledging the community they are in". All of the teachers responded with a negative when asked if they plan lessons particularly based on developing intercultural comments in their learners. To clarify, they were asked if intercultural competence is something they actively and consciously plan for in English lessons. Their answers revealed that intercultural competence is not directly planned for but is something they all value and focus on during cross-curricular work. Teacher C explains that "now that we are talking about it, intercultural competence is something that permeates my teaching, but is not something I specifically plan for or work on". Teacher A nods and follows up with "I think intercultural competence is always a part of our teaching because it involves being respectful of our differences" and is "a set of values, attitudes and skill that I think need to be included in all subjects and not only in English".

4.4   Skills

Skills in relation to intercultural competence are in this section mainly focused on the skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and communicative skills (Byram, 2020). Other skills that the participants mention as relevant for their learners to acquire are also included.

When it comes to skills that are deemed crucial for learners, teacher A, B and C unanimously stressed the importance of communicative skills. Teacher B makes a point of stating that the goal in many of their English lessons is for all of the learners to use their communication skills by expressing themselves in English. Teacher A and C agreed, and teacher C expanded with "my goal is first and foremost for the learners to feel comfortable speaking English and daring to do so without the pressure of sounding like a native speaker". Teacher A believes that daring to fail is an important aspect of enabling their class to communicate in English and teachers B nods and emphasizes the importance of the learners' learning environment being able to embrace making mistakes. Teacher B continues their reflection with an emphasis on their learners "being able to communicate, meaning that they have the ability to comprehend what their classmates are saying and being able to be understood by their peers".

Following, Teacher A then reflects on what abilities the learners need to gain in order to communicate in an effective way: "I believe that the learners firstly need to be exposed to enough variations of English texts and ways of speaking to build their understanding of the English language as well as gaining and practicing using vocabulary, so they actually know what words to use". Teacher C makes a point of relating that their experience in the classroom is that learners are very insecure about their pronunciation of English and tries to model being an imperfect speaker who makes mistakes and needs pauses to think of the right word to use.

Teacher A reflects on how some of their previous learners chose the strategy of talking with an accent from a different part of the world: "the learners talked with an Indian accent in the English lessons. They did it because it was an easier route for speaking in English for them. They adapted a role, so that they were not the ones speaking in a sense." The teacher struggled with whether or not to talk to the learners about it because there were no reactions from their fellow learners on the matter and they were finally speaking English freely in class. When reflecting back on it, teacher A would now have had a conversation about how the people that the learners are imitating might be offended or feel made fun of as a way of hopefully teaching them how words and ways of expression can be adapted to their circumstances as a part of developing their intercultural competence. Concerning this topic, teacher B reflects on the importance of the learners to encounter a wide variety of English accents in their lessons in order to prepare them for actual interactions with people from all over the world. "It is a small step towards preventing prejudice and promote openness in the first moments of meeting someone from another part of the world" they reason.

In their recent work with the topic of Africa, teacher C provides details on a part of their work concerning the use of authentic texts about apartheid in South Africa. They used excerpts from a speech made by Nelson Mandela with their learners to talk about and reflect on the fight against apartheid where they wanted them to "look at the text and see what their thoughts were, and if they were able to make any connections" after a previous social studies lesson on the human rights.

Teacher A tells us about a project they did with their learners where they in groups chose an English-speaking country to investigate further. Teacher A relates that the learners discovered "new information on the people who lived in that country, and explored the various cultures within the country that were different from one another". The learners presented their finding to the rest of the class and the teacher mediated a discussion between the learners focusing on how it relates to their own experiences. Teacher C chimes in and explains that they usually focus on discussions within the same realm after learning about other cultures. Teacher B follows this interaction closely and nods in seemingly approval but does not participate in this exact discussion.

4.5   Attitudes

In the context of attitudes within the framework of intercultural competence, all mentions of various attitudes are included. This topic brought forth great enthusiasm from the participants, and their reflections about and around intercultural competence and the associated attitudes are relayed in this subchapter.

As previously mentioned, all of the participants were concerned with their learners' ability to dare to speak English. Teacher A ties this into "daring to get to know each other's cultures" and the vulnerability and sensitivity they show in these meetings. They continued by stating "they have to dare to ask questions, be curios and open to learning". This last sentence can succinctly sum up the teachers' beliefs on what attitudes are necessary for learners to develop intercultural competence. To elaborate, teacher B brings up curiosity as an important element to begin the process of developing intercultural competence. Teachers A and C nod along, and C follows up with that they think the learners need to be present in the moment in order to be open for learning anything, and that in the context of intercultural competence that their

acknowledgement and respect of other cultures will follow. Teacher A continues with "curiosity through the English language about each other's culture, religion and traditions" will enable them to attaint new cultural knowledge.

Working with prejudices are emphasized greatly by all the teachers because they believe that tolerance is necessary for their learners to be able to be a functioning part of a multicultural society. Teacher C emphasizes that the classroom already functions as a "micro version" of the rest of Norwegian society and as a training arena for relating to people who are different. Teacher B exemplifies this with bringing up the learners' lunch boxes and how varied they can be based on background. Teacher A reflects on how the learners instinctive first response to something or someone when they are watching a news segment with the class can be "negative towards the person or thing being shown because it is something they are not familiar with". The idea of 'us' and 'them' is brought up by teacher C in relation to building a foundation that can prevent prejudices and has actively worked with their learners on how such dynamics can impact many people while referencing to their teaching of the history of Apartheid. All participants agreed that respect, tolerance, and understanding are key attitudes for learners to acquire in addition to openness and curiosity.

4.6   Teaching resources

When asked about their text choices, all of the teachers were adamant that they do not follow a textbook for their lessons planning in the English subject. Teacher C states that they "have not used English textbooks in many years because the teaching will not be good enough". They argue that the texts in their textbooks are not suitable for differentiation at the level that is needed in their classroom. Teacher B thinks the text are unsuitable because they are working in "a theme-based way", and there are often no texts relevant for the theme or topic they are usually working with. Teacher A describes English textbooks as "bad" and continues to explain that they are not adequate in pursuing the competence aims stated in the curriculum. Teacher B chimes in that they found the texts in English textbooks to be narrow and somewhat stereotypical where learning to develop intercultural competence is concerned. Teacher C nods and relays that there is only incremental changes to the textbooks after changing curriculum, and that a lot of the texts remain the same as before.

When asked what kind of resources or text they do use in their teaching, teacher B mentions that they have a resource bank they turn to when planning English lessons. It is not a joint resource bank, but "all the teachers I know have their own and share resources with the English teachers they know". This bank of resources contains books, online newspapers, and websites with teaching content such as "Twinkl or Teaching Funtastic". Teacher C emphasizes that they too have such a resource bank they have created themselves, but "we use all sorts of texts and if the bank does not have a suitable text I continue to look elsewhere or ask other teachers". Teacher A explains that they spend a lot of time finding suitable and relevant texts to use in the classroom and find the process "a bit hard, because the texts I find and want to use are often too difficult for my learners". The two other teachers nod along while teacher A continues:

> Although many learners are increasingly becoming good at understanding English, perhaps because of their use of social media, that is a slightly more superficial language. The language in these texts necessitates working with concepts and new words so much, which takes the focus away from the content a little. If the goal of a lesson is to work with the text over a longer period and enhance their endurance and persistency of continually exploring nuances of that text is one thing, but when learning about a theme or topic there is not enough time to consistently work in that way. When working with a difficult text, you can later on ask hypothetical questions or talk about the topic to include content-based learning. If the focus is mostly on content, then I use short texts that can further a good discussion on the topic.

All of the teachers preferred working with authentic texts when teaching English in general. Teacher B's approach is to "try and find texts written by someone who's native language is English where the intent of the texts is simply to communicate and not teach the language" and wishes they had more time in their planning of lessons to investigate deeper to make sure that the learners are exposed to "as many different voices of English as possible".

4.7   Assessment

The results on how the teacher plan for intercultural competence were not specific and not simply focused on developing intercultural competence in itself (see 4.7). According to

teacher B "we do not assess intercultural competence as its own thing, but it mixes into other assessments" with teacher C following up with "it is not something I actively try to assess". Teacher A notes that "objectively, it can be really difficult to assess intercultural competence since it does feel like I would be assessing someone's attitudes, thoughts or values and trying to implement those specific values in others". To combat these feelings, they look at what the curriculum states where "we are supposed to have Norwegian values, respect other religions and be able to express what we want to so it is these point I would focus my assessment on". A point of discussion then centered around how as experienced teachers, teacher A found the freedom provided by the curriculum to be advantageous to their practices as they "were not restricted by the constricts of testing" and bound by specific tests. Teacher B suggested that new teachers might feel "lost and don't know where to start" as the curriculum does not provide any specific guide in the assessment of English language skills.

When asked about how they assessed their learners' development of intercultural competence, the answers did not provide information on applicable strategies. The teachers' answers did provide information on strategies they would potentially use if the aim was to assess intercultural competence in their English upper primary classrooms. They all viewed oral assessment as a strategy that would allow them to consider the learners development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teacher B exemplifies from her now Year 6 class where they primarily would use oral assessment as "it would be hard to assess their understanding through a written text" and continues "it would be much more based on conversations and other oral aspects". In support, teacher C thinks it would be difficult for the learners to show "their ability to reflect on things we have learned about with texts, because they could simply regurgitate the conversation without taking part in it". Chiming in, teacher A believes that "when you are having a conversation with them it is a lot easier to see their understanding and their reflections". A strategy that combines written and oral assessment was provided by teacher C: "You can use a written assignment and follow up what they have written about orally and by asking questions". Teacher A, B and C all agree on this strategy as it is possible to control their written content more easily with an oral follow up.

According to teacher A, one could follow the learner's development over a longer period of time to assess for example tolerance. "As their teacher you can through conversations and observations at the least see if there is a positive or negative development for tolerance". Teacher C continues reflecting on the attitudes of the class as a whole can be indicative of

where they are at in their development of tolerance which can "guide the teacher in investigating what areas of intercultural competence might need work. For example, if there is a notable negative attitude toward a specific person, they might need more knowledge on who this person is and their background".

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will provide an in-depth discussion on the perspectives and practices of Norwegian English teacher in upper primary concerning their teaching and assessment of intercultural competence based on the results from the focus-group interview in light of the theoretical framework, previous research, and the national curriculum. This thesis aims to answer the main research questions of how EFL teachers in Norway are incorporating intercultural competence into their teaching practice and assessment. To structure the following discussion, it is broken down to answer the sub questions of this thesis:

RQ1: How are Norwegian English teachers incorporating intercultural competence into their lesson planning, classroom practice and assessment?
RQ2: How are teachers assessing their learners progress in developing intercultural competence?

     a. How do the teachers understand the concept of intercultural competence?

     b. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do they believe are relevant for the development of intercultural competence?

     c. What strategies and resources are they using to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they deem relevant?

     d. How do they address and assess learners' development of intercultural competence?

Before diving into the discussion of these research questions I want to address the point of the English subject's role in developing intercultural competence in learners. The process of coding pointed to the inclusion of this point as it is relevant. Its relevancy comes from the curriculum, where intercultural competence is specifically stated (Ministry of Education and research, 2020, p. 3), whereas the competency is not clearly spelled in other subject, therefore making the English subject the main focus of its development. The teachers all agree on intercultural competence relevancy in the English subject, and their reflections coincide with the curriculum standards for viewing English as a possible link to interaction with other cultures as well as being a common global language.

5.1 Sub question a

The first sub question aimed to gain information about the teachers understanding of intercultural competence and how it relates to this thesis definition and understanding of the term. This is the main focus of the following discussion in addition to what components they believe are relevant for understanding and developing intercultural competence in their learners.

5.1.1 Intercultural competence

The teachers understanding of the term coincides with this thesis's definition of intercultural competence that involves having the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that enables individuals to adapt to new cultural contexts and build relationships with people from diverse backgrounds (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Since the aim of this question was to make sure of a common understanding of the concept, the results confirm the teachers understanding of intercultural competence as involving knowledge about other cultures, openness and the communicative language needed to interact and show respect to others from a different culture. These results agree with Byram's (2007) views in that the learners need to be able to effectively interact with others from varying cultural background as well as the Norwegian curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). The results align with both the theoretical frameworks as well as the curriculum (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 2007; Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The teachers can therefore be argued to conceptually understand what intercultural competence is and confirms that the basis of the following discussion is in agreement with this thesis.

Secondly, the teachers all agreed on this description where they refer to cultural knowledge, various skills, and attitudes such as openness as necessary to develop intercultural competence. These components will be discussed in detail in the next sections, but on an overarching level, the participants had the necessary knowledge to talk about and reflect on the questions asked with a similar understanding of the terms used. The teachers understanding of what intercultural competence as a concept is coincides with Vesterås's (2022, p. 90) thesis exploring the same question with other Norwegian English teachers. The fact that the interview was conducted with a focus group would likely help provoke the

similar definitions as they listened to each other's thoughts and reasonings, and other interpretations might have been hindered as a result.

Teacher A highlighted the significance of cultural knowledge and emphasized the need for learners to understand various and diverse cultural traditions and practices. Their input resonates with Byram's (2007) views in that learners should be able to interact effectively with individuals form varying cultural backgrounds. Similarly, teacher B viewed the role of developing intercultural competence as a learning tool for learners to gain knowledge about world while respecting others. Moreover, the participants believed respect to be central to intercultural competence with its importance in promoting positive and respectful interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. The teachers' views are thus aligned with Deardorff's (2006) definition of intercultural competence in valuing other's values, beliefs, and behaviours.

Throughout the interview, notion of what the teachers considered communicative competence is not specific, and not often mentioned beyond learning to talk to people from other cultures or understanding and being understood by their peers. This perspective can point to a lack of knowledge about the subject or could be the teachers influencing each other's train of thoughts. Nevertheless, the teachers' perception and understanding of what the term 'intercultural competence' means and entails aligns with the theoretical framework and the curriculum.

5.2   Sub question b

The first sub question aimed to gain information on the skills, knowledge and attitudes the interviewees believed were relevant for their learners' development of intercultural competence. The following sections will discuss these results in light of the theoretical framework and curriculum.

5.2.1   Knowledge

Byram (2020) have criticized the traditional approach to cultural education where the predominant focus is on factual knowledge about other cultures. The results indicate that the

teachers approach to teaching cultural knowledge coincides somewhat with the traditional approach. The interview provided information on what kind of knowledge they thought were important to develop intercultural competence and showed that the teachers focus on the history and geography in addition to knowledge about culture, religions and traditions while also focusing on the diversity of the English language and the societal impact on people. This coincides with Listuen's (2017) and Vesterås's (2020) findings where the instructional objectives were primarily aiming to enhance learners' general knowledge rather than understanding diverse ways of life.

The results from this thesis could be argued to encompass how the teachers aim to provide the elements necessary for their learners to understand diverse ways of life as exemplified by teacher C in their cross-curricular teaching on Africa where they focus on teaching the historical contexts for how the English language was spread. The participating teachers have worked with their learners on both the tangible and intangible aspects of a culture other than their own which according to Huber et al. (2014, p. 13-14) can collectively shape the learner's perceptions and interactions with the world, and help the learners understand and embrace diversity across cultures (Byram and Doyé, 1999, p. 142-143; Byram, 2020, p. 95-87).

The participants are not specific if their teaching focuses on knowing some underlying causes of when and why intercultural misunderstandings occur as emphasized by Byram (2020, p. 175). The knowledge of the types of misunderstandings and their causes in the interaction between interlocuters of different cultural origins (Byram, 2020, p. 51) are not mentioned by the teachers and subsequently no specific ways of teaching learners about recognizing and mediating such an encounter is detailed. The teachers have commented on understanding various social dynamics and different ways of communicating in other cultures as noted by teacher B and C's work on English-speaking cultures and consequently follows the task of helping the learners to a step forward in the aim of developing an intercultural understanding of various ways of living, thinking, and communicating (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2).

The knowledge *savoir* encompasses facts about cultures as well as a deeper understanding of societal values, norms, and historical contexts (Byram, 2020, p. 85-87). In their teaching about Africa, teacher C speaks about the national memories of England and South-Africa. The learning objectives concerning the national memories of other countries than the learners own

are in this case fulfilled (Byram, 2020, p. 51). Teacher B and C explains their experiences with working with English-speaking cultures where cultural practices, social processes, and identities (Byram, 2020, p. 85-85; UNESCO, 2013, p. 10) are important components of their teaching. Therefore, I would argue that the participants in this focus-group fulfils most of the requirements laid out by the theoretical framework as well as the curriculum concerning knowledge as a savoir.

What could be considered missing in the focus-group conversation concerning knowledge is the mention of identities in their work with intercultural competence. That does not mean that cultural identities have not come up at all throughout the interview, but in relation to teaching the English subject there were no specific mentions on how the teachers work with identity in their classrooms other than a conversation about how the learners' lunch can indicate cultural differences and the acknowledgement of this kind of diversity.

All of the teachers emphasized the need for their pupils to learn knowledge about the English language and knowing how to use this knowledge in their interactions with others. They believe it to be foundational for their learners' ability to communicate with other English speakers. Both teachers A and B stress the importance of their learners both knowing enough English words and knowing how and where to use this linguistic knowledge. While communicative ability is a skill, the foundation of learning linguistic knowledge in order to become competent users of English is relevant and also stated in the Norwegian curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2).

5.2.2   Skills

The results provided information on the level of importence the teachers considered learners communicative skills were in the development of intercultural competence, in which the teachers were all unanimous in their agreement that it is vital. Their understanding of communicative skills first centered around the learners being comfortable speaking with their own accent, and the wide variety of English accents they might encounter when interacting with people from other parts of the world. One of the teacher's reflects on how pronunciation can be adapted to the learners' circumstances which nudges them into the territory of intercultural competence in the sense that their teaching aim to enable learners to communicate in a variety of English-speaking interactions, thus contributing to the learners'

foundation for communicating with others regardless of their background (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 2). Meaning that the teacher here provides the learners with opportunities for reflecting on various circumstances and how they could potentially adapt to the situations and environments.

In their continued reflections, the teachers focused on their learners acquiring the skill of being able to effectively communicate in English with another person or people. Their learners' comprehension and understanding of what their classmates are trying to communicate while also being able to be understood themselves when speaking English is important. This was a sentiment they all agreed was foundational for learning to interact interculturally and effectively communicate with and relates to one of the objectives presented by Byram (2020, p. 52-53) concerning the use of real-time application of knowledge, skills and attitudes used to interact with interlocutors from a different country or culture.

The skill of interpreting and relating as a *savoir* encapsulating the learner's ability to decipher and establish connections between different cultural elements (Byram & Doyé, 1999, p. 142-143). This skillset's abilities include interpreting texts, events, or situations from foreign cultures by relating them to their own experiences and societal norms. Teacher C shared an activity where the learners were tasked to interpret parts of a speech made by Nelson Mandela, and to use their interpretation to discuss how the South African government viewed human rights versus the Norwegian governments. The aim of this activity is arguably to identify the ethnocentric perspective of a document from South Africa, and to understand where the background of this perspective while trying to mediate between conflicting interpretations of human rights in the two countries (Byram, 2020, p. 52).

The *savoir* detailing the skills of discovery and interaction is described by Byram and Byram et al. (2002, p. 13; 2020, p. 88-90) as engaging in interactions that lead to the discovery of new cultural facets and employing this newfound knowledge effectively during intercultural communication. The activity of working with excerpts from a Nelson Mandela speech are also indicative of teacher C working on eliciting concepts and values from a document where learners can use their knowledge to apply the principles of discrimination or racism in another setting (Byram, 2020, p. 52-53). Teacher C does not go into detail on what the class were discussing, but this activity also has the potential of fulfilling another one of Byram's (2020, p. 52-53) objectives describing that the learners need the ability to identify a significant

reference within South African culture and its significance and connotation in a Norwegian context.

The participants in this study does not seem to differentiate between the skills of interpreting and relating, and the skills of discovery and interaction in their definitions and reflections on the various skills needed in this context, but their examples of activities and class work do differentiate somewhat between the two. Encouraging their learners to explore another English-speaking country in groups with support from the teacher could be argued to be a first step in developing the intercultural skill of discovery and interaction as it actively engages the learners in interactions that lead to the discovery of new cultural facets and make use of real-time knowledge, skills, and attitudes for mediating between interlocutors between their own and a foreign culture (Byram, 2020, p. 52-53).

The results show that the teachers in unanimously agree on the importance of communicative skills in the development of intercultural competence. Their reflections highlight the significance of learners being able to comfortably communicate in English, navigate various accents, and effectively understanding and being understood by others. By emphasizing the importance of communicative skills, interpreting, and relating cultural elements, and facilitating discovery and interaction in their teaching, they are preparing learners for effective intercultural communication. The findings in this study underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to the teaching of intercultural competence where language learning, critical reflection and cultural exploration are all included.

5.2.3   Attitudes

The participants seem to agree that learners need the attitudes of openness and curiosity to enable their development of intercultural competence. Specifically, teacher B reflects on curiosity as an important element to begin the process of developing intercultural competence while the other participants nod in agreement. Teacher A states that curiosity about each other's culture, religion and traditions through the English language will enable the attainment of new cultural knowledge. This sentiment is supported by Byram (2020, p. 174) who view curiosity and openness as crucial for navigating diverse cultural perspectives. Vesterås's (2022, p. 91) thesis results showed that teachers recognized the significance of openness and curiosity in fostering critical cultural awareness but found through observations that explicit

attention to attitudes in English lessons were lacking. Skaugen's (2020, p. 64) observations resulted in an absence of teaching explicit attitudes, despite its significance as a component of intercultural competence. The results from this study can indicate the same trends, where the teachers all emphasize the importance of openness and curiosity but were not explicit in their detailing of how they work on this competence beyond working with their learners understanding of other cultures.

The results show a mutual agreement that respect was an additional important attitude. The participants view on their learners developing respect coincides with the curriculum's emphasis on respect throughout the interdisciplinary topics where it can contribute to the development of intercultural competence (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The teachers tied respect and tolerance to the prevention of prejudice. Teacher C references their learners work with the history of Apartheid to discuss and reflect around the notion of 'us' and 'them', and the impact prejudice could ultimately lead to. One of Byram's (2020, p. 50) learning objectives relating to the *savoir* of attitudes which states that learner should be willing to engage with "otherness in a relationship of equality". Teacher A reflected on the learners first response when interacting with someone or something new where their attitudes are often explicitly shown towards a group of people the learners perceived to be different. This reflection ties in the above learning objective, but teacher A is not explicit in what their response would be, or how they would endeavour to teach the preferable attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect. The teachers are thus presenting a willingness to and an aim for countering discrimination and prejudice as the curriculum also xstresses (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

5.2.4 Critical cultural awareness

Despite the theoretical emphasis on critical cultural awareness within Byram's model of communicative competence (Byram & Doyé, 1999), the conscious implementation of this framework in the English subject teaching in Norway remains mostly absent from the results of this thesis. Byram (1997, p. 53) definition of critical cultural awareness includes the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products in other cultures and countries as well as our own, based on explicit criteria. Meaning, that the teachers should help their learners facilitate a conscious thought process on how they view other cultures and use those same criteria to examine their own culture. The research results from this thesis provided no

direct thoughts on how the teachers would facilitate this dimension. The teachers did present various unfamiliar cultures to their learners but did not provide information on if this approach also considered the learners' own culture. Teacher B reflected on what kind of food the learners eat at lunch and addressed how this aspect of culture might seem strange to them but are completely normal in other cultures. This opportunity allowed for learners to use their own knowledge and experience to discuss and reflect upon this aspect and is consistent with the theory (Byram & Doyé, 1999; Byram, 1997).

Teachers B's example of using food culture to discuss not only one's own culture but also others can give us a glimpse into how the elements of critical cultural awareness can be integrated into the Norwegian upper primary English classrooms. These discussions should not only be limited to superficial observations, but also promote an understanding of cultural values and beliefs that are nuanced. Therefore, I would argue that the teachers approach to teaching critical cultural awareness is implicit through working with attitudes and the comparisons made when learning about other cultures. This argument is supported by previous research (Vesterås, 2022; Skaugen, 2020; Bandura & Sercu, 2005). Skaugen (2020) and Vesterås (2022) found more detailed results, which implies that the results coming from this thesis may be an anomaly. The lack of results in this study might simply be caused by the sample participants, as both the small sample size and the participants all working at the same school might not be representative for all English teachers in upper primary in Norway.

The absence of results pertaining to critical cultural awareness suggest that an evaluation of pedagogical approaches and curriculum designed to incorporate this dimension of intercultural competence is needed. The theory presented in this thesis (see chapter 2.2-2.3) can provide a framework for guiding this evaluation, but the implementation would require a large amount of effort. The results do underscore the importance of further research and action in this dimension of intercultural competence.

5.3   Sub question C

This sub chapter will discuss the results coinciding with the sub question concerning what strategies and resources the teachers are using to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they deem relevant to their learners.

5.3.1 Teaching resources

The teacher reflections surrounding text choices for their teaching of English relays no dependence on traditional English textbooks due to difficulties in differentiation and unsuitability. Teacher B views English textbooks as a bit "narrow and somewhat stereotypical" and prefers to find suitable texts elsewhere. These results contradict the results coming from Davcheva and Sercu (2005, p. 90, 106) where a majority of the teachers used textbooks in their language teaching. Their study argues that the textbooks way of teaching about culture is stereotypic. These results are older and not directly tied to the Norwegian context but speak to the history of teaching English and is included because one of the participants echoed this sentiment in their experience of teaching English as a new teacher. Lund's (2007, p. 329-330) dissertation presented textbooks as a key tool used in the Norwegian context of teaching English and a considered the textbooks lacking in terms of working with learners' attitudes towards diverse cultures of fostering a critical evaluation of their own cultural perspectives. While this dissertation considered the textbooks related to the old Norwegian curriculum, it is still relevant as one of the teachers interviewed noting small changes in the textbooks based on the new curriculum. Vesterås (2022, p. 91-92) found in her thesis that Norwegian teachers of English seldomly used textbooks as an instructional resource. Her findings reflect the results from this thesis's focus group interview.

The participants in this thesis chose to include text in their lessons that are suitable to what they are teaching and find texts from their own bank of resources, other teachers, or sources they find on their own through the internet. Ciornei and Dina (2015) researched this very topic and their findings showed articles, interviews, songs, and documentaries to be most beneficial. This concerned the use of authentic texts in language learning where in 2014 (p. 278) these researchers found results showing improved communication and cultural knowledge as a result of using authentic texts. While these studies are conducted in an academic setting, their results can still indicate that my results are significant because the process of language learning and its methods are not foundationally different besides the level and pace the learners are taught. The language focused on in Ciornei and Dina's (2014, 2015) research was the English language, and is therefore relevant to the teaching of English despite the differences in contexts. The participants in this study focused on using authentic text in their teaching of the English language and the results provided by this thesis as well as

Vesterås (2022, p. 92) indicate a trend in Norwegian English teachers seldom use of textbooks while utilizing their skills in choosing suitable authentic texts for their teaching.

As authentic texts are produced by, and for, native English speakers they can play a role in fostering intercultural competence through their linguistic diversity and cultural insights (Ciornei & Dina, 2015). Arguably, the teachers' reflections as shown by this study, advocates for including authentic materials reflecting various cultural perspectives in agreement with Bland's (2020) suggestions. Teacher C exposed her learners to an English-speaking culture beyond the scope of the BANA countries (Bland, 2020) when focusing on South Africa which concurs with the competence aims of interpreting and discussing texts and delving into cultural facets as stated in the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 7-8). The instructional objectives for working with the history of South Africa and Apartheid focuses on the "big-c culture" aimed at enhancing the learners' general knowledge (Listuen, 2017, p. 12, 83), but could be said to not coincide with Listuen's findings as the objectives could be said to aim at understanding diverse ways of life as well.

While the shift towards more use of authentic texts in English language teaching is beneficial for learners' development of intercultural competence (Bland, 2020; Davcheva & Sercu, 2005), it can also pose a challenge for teachers. The traditional English textbooks often include structured lessons plans and activities for language development, while using authentic texts and resources may require more preparation and adaptation to suit the learners needs, as commented on by teacher A. Finding suitable authentic text in itself can be time consuming, and finding or creating their own activities that fits the learning goals can be even more so. The learners might also need extra support from teachers to comprehend the texts if the authentic texts are linguistically complex and have cultural nuances. By using authentic texts in their teaching of English, Norwegian upper primary teachers can help develop their learners' intercultural competence but requires a concentrated and often time-consuming effort.

5.3.2   Planning for development of intercultural competence

The findings regarding the teachers' planning and selection of resources offer insights into how they foster intercultural competence in their teaching of the English subject. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, all of the teachers interviewed expressed their deliberate choice to

not use traditional English textbooks in favour of more flexible and diverse resources. They deemed the English textbooks as inadequate for helping their learners meet the competence aims as outlined in the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 7).

The teachers' reflections revealed their preference for using authentic texts that are sourced from various platform and emphasizes the importance of exposing learners to how the language is used in the real world and the cultural insights they might provide. Byram's (2020) advocating for balancing the integration of language learning and cultural understanding resonates with the teachers' reflections. Additionally, the teachers who participated in this study show their efforts to expose their learners to a multitude of cultural perspectives and linguistic varieties by curating lessons with their choices of diverse texts, concurring with Bland's (2020) suggestions.

An important point to make in terms of how the teachers planned their lessons in order to develop their learners' intercultural competence, is that the results suggests that these particular upper elementary teacher does not purposely plan their teaching to include components of intercultural competence. They did not actively or consciously plan lessons for developing intercultural competence in their learners', but the concept is still valued and a focus during planning for the English subject, cross-curricular work and working with other subjects. The teachers view their learners' development of intercultural competence as something that permeates all teaching, and not just the English subject.

5.4   Sub question d

This section will discuss the results gained on exploring the teachers views on assessment of intercultural competence in their English upper primary classrooms in relation to the theoretical framework and the Norwegian curriculum.

5.4.1   Assessment

Strategies in assessment can help teachers to monitor their learners progress and identify areas in need of further teaching or development. In the context of foreign language, Burner (2019 have documented learning benefits formative assessment. It is also the assessment method guiding Norwegian teachers as stated by the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research,

2020, p. 8) The results are indicative of the teachers following the curriculum and research in the overarching sense. While the term formative assessment is not mentioned by any of the participants in the focus group interview, they are clearly referencing formative methods as a way of gaining insight to their learners' development of intercultural competence when they are speaking about assessment in the English subject. This is exemplified by their view on assessing intercultural competence through "conversations", "a combination of oral and written assignments", "observations" or "a positive or negative development of tolerance". Clearly, they view the assessment of intercultural competence as longer process, and not something that can be judged by a single task on its own.

 While a single assessment might provide a way to consider the attainment of one of the objectives as described by Byram (2020), it could not include and measure enough facets of intercultural competence to be able to provide a comprehensive enough assessment of a learner's attainment of intercultural competence (Dervin, 2010). Fantini (2009) emphasizes that multiple methods should be included to give a comprehensive evaluation of intercultural competence. The teachers expressed difficulty in isolating and directly assessing parts of intercultural competence, and their reflections on including it into broader assessments or indirectly evaluating their learners through observations of attitudes and behaviours is according to Byram (2020) advantageous. Byram (2020) cautions against assessing intercultural competence directly due to its complex and multifaceted nature and suggests that it may be more effectively integrated into existing assessment frameworks.

All of the teachers mentioned oral assessment as the main strategy they would likely use to consider their learners development of intercultural competence since written assessments may not capture the learners' understanding and reflections fully. Teacher A believed an oral strategy to be advantageous because they believe it is easier to evaluate their learners understanding and reflections on a topic through conversations rather than written text. This belief resonates with Byram's (2020) suggestion that real-time interactions can provide insights into the learners' communicative skills and cultural awareness. The teachers believe oral assessment allows for a more dynamic and interactive evaluation which can provide information on learners' communicative skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness through conversations and interactions. Additionally, they believe that combining written and oral assessment strategies would offer a comprehensive approach to evaluating their learners' development of intercultural competence. This would also allow them to assess both

intercultural competence as well as their linguistic proficiency. The teachers' beliefs are supported by Byram (2020) as he emphasizes the importance of formative assessment when promoting intercultural learning.

The Norwegian curriculum for English allows teachers the freedom to choose their assessment strategies as they see fit in order to assess their learners oral, written, digital, and writing skills in the English subject (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 8). As such, beyond the specification of the assessment being formative and to allow the learners to express their views on achievement and improvement with the teacher's guidance for continued development, the teachers are allowed free reign to assess their learners in their achievement of skills and level of achievement in relation to the curriculum's competence aims. The participants viewed this freedom as liberating and found the lack of restrictions enables the possibilities for adapting their assessment to whatever the learning situation might be. Teacher B pointed out that new teachers without much experience might struggle with this freedom and perhaps needs more specific guidance. The results then might suggest further additions to the curriculum that may provide teachers with guidance concerning the assessment of the various competence aims that can be used as a resource when the teachers deem it necessary.

Results from the focus group interview showed that none of the teacher had specific information on the kinds of strategies they currently use to assess intercultural competence. Therefore, this thesis has no results enabling the discussion on the teachers' practices in relation to theory and previous research. What this discussion will depend on is the teachers' thoughts and reflections on how they would assess their learners' intercultural competence and its relation to the presented theory and research. The chapter concerning previous research is empty in its presentation of relevant research in relation to the assessment of intercultural competence in the Norwegian upper primary context. This means that the discussion is based only on the theory and the results gathered in this thesis and is therefore lacking in its relevance to the context. Meanwhile this thesis can provide a starting point for continued research aiming to gain information on the assessment practices of intercultural competence by Norwegian primary teachers.

This discussion concerning assessment in the context of intercultural competence emphasizes the challenges and complexities that is inherent when evaluating this multifaceted

competency. The results highlight the need for an approach to assessment that takes both language proficiency and intercultural competence into consideration when teachers are assessing their upper primary learners' development if intercultural competence.

6   CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the thoughts, reflections, and experiences of Norwegian English teachers in upper primary in their teaching and assessing of learners' intercultural competence. Guided by the curriculum and framework, a focus group interview with three experienced teachers was conducted and enabled the discussion in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to concisely answer the main research question with the help of the four sub research questions which have guided the research process and helped limit the scope of this thesis.

6.1   Concluding remarks

This thesis aimed to investigate how Norwegian English teachers incorporate intercultural competence into their lesson planning, classroom practice, and assessment, as well as to explore their experiences and understanding of the concept. Through the discussion, it is clear that the teachers' understanding of intercultural competence aligns with the defined framework and previous research of this theses. Their understanding encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours they deem necessary for their learners to navigate diverse cultural interactions and contexts effectively. The importance of having a common understanding of intercultural competence among those who teach it serves as the foundation for its integration into teaching practices.

The findings discussed confirm that the interviewed teachers perceive intercultural competence as involving the attitude of openness and curiosity as well as the cultural knowledge and communicative skills that are essential for enabling respectful interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. These perceptions are consistent with the established theoretical frameworks such as Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence and are also in line with the goals outlined in the Norwegian curriculum, especially in the English subject. Additionally, the teachers emphasized the significance of respect as an attitude in the fostering of positive intercultural interactions which coincides with this thesis definition as borrowed from Deardorff. The teachers overall understanding of intercultural competence is in alignment with the research framework and curriculum objectives.

Regarding knowledge, this study reveals that the teachers have a tendency of focusing more on factual information rather than the understanding of diverse ways of life. The teachers prioritize teaching cultural knowledge, including, history, geography, and cultural traditions. Their direction of focus aligns with a traditional approach to culture education and may suggest a need for further exploration of pedagogical strategies in the Norwegian context that can promote deeper cultural understanding as well as awareness of the underlying causes of intercultural misunderstandings.

In terms of skills, the teachers unanimously agree on the importance of communicative competence. Their overall emphasis on the skills included the ability to navigate various accents of the English language and being able to effectively communicate with others in English no matter their cultural background. Additionally, their approach to teaching is supported by the theoretical framework, even if their teaching strategies does not encompass most of the dimensions within intercultural competence. Their teaching approaches includes and encourages their learners to interpret and relate cultural situations or documents, as well as to discover and interact with new cultural facets. These skills are foundational for fostering intercultural understanding in learners while preparing them to effectively communicate in diverse contexts.

In relation to attitudes, the teachers highlight openness, curiosity, and respect in the fostering of intercultural competence. While these attitudes are acknowledged as significant, the findings indicate a need for more explicit attention to cultivating them in a Norwegian classroom context, coinciding with the previous research performed in the same context. The teachers' emphasis on respect and tolerance aiming to counter prejudice and discrimination, and thus aligns with the curriculum's goal of promoting positive and respectful interactions across cultures. These findings and the discussion of this thesis would suggest continued efforts to approach intercultural competence in a multifaceted way to include language learning, critical reflection, and cultural explorations as it is essential for preparing learners to effectively engage and thrive in a world that is increasingly interconnected.

Furthermore, this research explored and can shed a light on the strategies and resources used by Norwegian English teachers to teach intercultural competence. The teachers' choice to not use English textbooks in favour of more flexible and diverse resources was a deliberate one. This choice can reflect a broader shift in Norway where the use of authentic texts in language

learning is emphasized by the importance of exposing English learners to how the language is actually used in the real world and the potential cultural insights such texts can derive. The participants in this study sourced their texts from various platforms, which underscores their initiative in the aim of providing their learners with a multifaceted and rich understanding of language and culture. Their approach aligns with recommendations from established researchers within the field such as Byram and Bland, who advocates for balancing language learning with cultural understanding.

However, it is important to note that while the teachers value intercultural competence and their English teaching is inclusive of it, they do not necessarily plan their lessons explicitly in order to develop this competence in their learners. Instead, the teachers view it as something that permeates all teaching activities regardless of the subject. This includes cross-curricular work and collaboration with subjects other than English. These findings suggests that there is a need for more intentional integration of intercultural competence into lesson planning processes and teacher practice and highlights an area of language education in need of further development.

Addressing the sub research question regarding the assessment of intercultural competence in Norwegian upper primary English classrooms, this thesis sheds light on the strategies and challenges teachers can experience when evaluating this multifaceted and complex competency. The findings indicate that the reflections surrounding assessment practices were not intentional, but their teachers expressed that assessing intercultural competence would be a longitudinal process where observations and interactions are in focus, as opposed to singular tasks. The teachers' emphasized the need for multiple methods for assessing such a comprehensive and multifaceted competence and found it challenging to evaluate attitudes and behaviours in their learners. Oral assessment emerged as the preferred strategy to assess intercultural competence as it would allow the teachers to gather information on their learners' communicative skills and cultural awareness more effectively than written assessments. Their optimal strategy for a longitudinal assessment would be one integrating both oral and written assessment.

Despite the freedom the Norwegian curriculum affords teachers in selecting assessment strategies, the study reveals potential challenges for new or unexperienced teachers in navigating this freedom. This could potentially be the case for other teachers who are not well

versed in the framework of intercultural competence as well. While the research was not able to gather information on the teachers' current assessment practices, their reflections underscore a need for further research to be conducted in the Norwegian upper primary context to explore the teachers' assessment of intercultural competence in a comprehensive manner. This study highlights the complexities involved in the process of assessing intercultural competence and emphasizes an approach that is formative and considers both language proficiency and intercultural awareness. By continuing to address the challenges presented in this thesis and continuing the exploration of effective assessment practices, teachers can be even more helpful in preparing their learners for an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.

In conclusion, this thesis has provided a comprehensive exploration of how Norwegian English teachers incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching practices. Both their approaches and their challenges in fostering this competency have been addressed. This thesis aligns with established theoretical framework and previous research and have addressed areas for improvement while emphasizing the need for continued research and development. Thus, this thesis can offer valuable insights for teachers, educators, the Ministry of Education and Research as well as policymakers. As teachers and learners continually navigate and increasingly interconnected and diverse global landscape, developing intercultural competence is essential to be able to thrive as respectful, empathetic, and effective communicators. This research highlights the importance of ongoing efforts to integrate intercultural competence into teacher practices to ensure the learners gain of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate a cultural complex world.

6.2   Limitations

As this thesis has explored the reflections, perspectives, and practices of three teachers in their work with intercultural competence in the upper primary English classroom, there is a need to emphasise that the results would not necessarily apply for all teacher of the English subject in Norwegian primary schools. As discussed, the teachers' perspectives are in some areas coinciding with the theoretical framework and previous research, but since the sample of participants are so small the results are not able to be representative for all teacher who practice the teaching of intercultural competence in the English subject.

In the scheduling of the focus group interview I encountered some difficulty in the scheduling itself as well as the recruitment of participants. If there was sufficient time, it would have been interesting to conduct another focus-group interview with teachers from another part of the country to expand the amount of data and explore their similarities and differences. It would also have been interesting to make observations of the teachers to add data on their actual practices concerning the teaching of intercultural competence to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their reflections and perspectives.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

The research conducted in this thesis aimed to explore Norwegian English teachers' perspectives, reflections and practices concerning the teaching and assessment of intercultural competence in their upper primary learners. The insight gained on this topic through this thesis is partly a confirmation on previous research and partly provides new knowledge to the field of teaching intercultural competence in the context of upper primary English classrooms in Norway. To elaborate, the results of this thesis support the findings of previous research on teachers' perspectives and practices on teaching intercultural competence but presents new knowledge about their perspectives and practices on assessing intercultural competence development in their learners.

The discussion section of this thesis points to several aspects that would benefit from more exploration and research, such as assessment practices in the Norwegian primary context, a need for explicit planning for development of intercultural competence, and promotion of pedagogical strategies that can promote learners cultural understanding on a deeper level. I would argue that a more elaborate exploration of assessment practices is needed, and further research on tools and strategies of assessment in the Norwegian curriculum could be beneficial. There have been studies conducted on the teaching aspect of intercultural competence, but since the results here point to a great deal of subjectivity in terms of text choices and activities, a further exploration of how teachers can choose texts and activities to ensure that all dimensions of intercultural competence are taught would be interesting. It could also be helpful to teachers who taught when the new curriculum was implement, who have not been able to explore the many avenues of teaching intercultural competence through focused studying as recent graduates have.

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7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Intervjuguide

Fokusgruppeintervju

1. Hvor mange års erfaring har dere som lærere i grunnskolen?
2. Hvor mange års erfaring har dere som engelsklærer på mellomtrinnet?
3. Har dere formell utdanning i engelskfaget, og hvis så, hvor mange studiepoeng?

4. Kan dere fortelle litt om hvordan dere ser på engelskfagets rolle i en stadig mer globalisert verden? (Lokalt og globalt)

5. Hva legger dere i begrepet 'interkulturell kompetanse'?
6. Hvilke ferdigheter eller kunnskap tenker dere at er relevante for utviklingen av interkulturell kompetanse hos elevene?
7. Hvor ofte jobber dere med identitet og kultur i engelskfaget?
8. Hvordan forbereder dere undervisning i engelskfaget?
    a. Har dere spesielt fokus på interkulturell kompetanse under denne planleggingen?
    b. Ser dere på interkulturell kompetanse som noe sitt eget kompetanseområde som spesifikt må jobbes med?
9. Hvordan velger dere, og bruker, engelske tekster i engelskundervisningen?
    a. Hvordan jobber dere med verdier og holdninger?
    b. savoirs
10. Hvordan jobber dere med interkulturell kompetanse på et lokalt og på et globalt nivå i klasserommet?
11. Har dere hatt noen spesielt positive eller negative opplevelser i arbeidet med interkulturalisme eller interkulturell kompetanse i klasserommet?

12. Hva tar dere utgangspunkt i når dere skal vurdere elevenes utvikling av interkulturell kompetanse?
13. Hvordan jobber dere med vurdering av interkulturell kompetanse?
14. Hvordan opplever dere at kompetansemålene i engelskfaget støtter opp under planlegging av undervisning og dermed elevenes utvikling av interkulturell kompetanse?

7.2 Appendix 2 – SIKT approval

⬤⬤ Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	**Vurderingstype**	**Dato**
896641	Standard	17.11.2023

Tittel
Interkulturell kompetanse på mellomtrinnet: Lærernes perspektiver, praksis og vurdering

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Høgskolen i Innlandet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og pedagogikk / Institutt for pedagogikk og samfunnsfag – Hamar

Prosjektansvarlig
Knut Øystein Høvik

Student
Guro Tjernsli

Prosjektperiode
01.12.2023 – 01.02.2024

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 01.02.2024.

Meldeskjema ↗

Kommentar
OM VURDERINGEN
Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket. Vi har nå vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene.

TAUSHETSPLIKT
Forskningsdeltagerne har yrkesmessig taushetsplikt. De kan ikke dele taushetsbelagte opplysninger med forskningsprosjektet. Vi anbefaler at du minner dem på taushetsplikten. Merk at det ikke er nok å utelate navn ved omtale av elever, pasienter el. Vær forsiktig med bruk av eksempler og bakgrunnsopplysninger som tid, sted, kjønn og alder.

KOMMENTARER TIL INFORMASJONSSKRIVET
Informasjonsskrivet ditt mangler noen punkter loven krever er med. Du må derfor legge til disse punktene i informasjonsskrivet før du gir dette til forskningsdeltakerne dine. Du trenger ikke å laste opp den oppdaterte versjonen i meldeskjemaet:

Når behandlingen av personopplysninger skal avsluttes og hva som da skjer med personopplysningene: sletting, anonymisering eller videre lagring
At du behandler opplysningene om dine forskningsdeltagere basert på deres samtykke
At utvalget ditt har rett til begrensning og dataportabilitet (kopi)
Kontaktopplysninger til prosjektansvarlig (veileder)
Kontaktopplysninger til personvernombudet ved din institusjon

Ta gjerne en titt på våre nettsider for hjelp til formuleringer: https://sikt.no/informasjon-til-deltakarane-i-forskingsprosjekt

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt og hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el.).

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

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7.3 Appendix 3 – Participant invitation

Invitasjon til deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet
Intercultural competence and assessment in upper elementary.

Bakgrunn og formål
Jeg studerer ved Høgskolen i Innlandet, og har nå begynt på det siste året for grunnskolelærerutdanningen 1-7 hvor jeg i denne forbindelsen skriver en masteroppgave i Engelsk. Formålet med dette forskningsprosjektet er å utforske hvordan engelsklærere på mellomtrinnet arbeider med elevenes utvikling av interkulturell kompetanse i klasserommet samt hvordan denne utviklingen vurderes i forhold til den nye lærerplanen i Engelsk. Denne masteroppgaven er under veiledning av Knut Øystein Høvik og Björn Sundmark tilknyttet Høgskolen i Innlandet. Forskningsprosjektet er ledet av meg, Guro Tjernsli.

Dette er en forespørsel til deg om å delta på dette forskningsprosjektet fordi du som engelsklærer på mellomtrinnet kan bidra med erfaringer, refleksjoner og innsikt til dette forskningsprosjektet.

Frivillig deltakelse og rett til personvern
Ved å si ja til deltakelse i dette prosjektet betyr det at du sier ja til å delta i et fokusgruppeintervju med 2-3 andre lærere. Intervjuet vil foregå som en åpen samtale hvor jeg vil stille åpne spørsmål rundt temaene i denne oppgaven, og du får muligheten til å reflektere rundt spørsmålene på egen hånd og sammen med de andre deltakerne i intervjuet.

Det er frivillig å være med på dette forskningsprosjektet, og du vil ha mulighet til å trekke deg til enhver tid uten nærmere forklaring og dine opplysninger og bidrag vil bli slettet. Du kan også unnlate å svare på spørsmål som stilles. De opplysningene som blir gitt av deg under intervjuet, vil bli anonymisert og behandlet konfidensielt. Intervjuet vil bli spilt inn på et lydopptak som vil slettes når intervjuet er transkribert.

All informasjon som blir innhentet vil bli lagret slik at ingen skal få tilgang til informasjon om deg. I dette forskningsprosjektet vil det ikke bli benyttet personlige opplysninger og du vil være anonymisert ved hjelp av falske navn. Loven om personvern vil bli fulgt, og jeg behandler opplysningene dine basert på ditt samtykke.
Som deltager har du rett på i å få innsyn i de delene av prosjektet du har bidratt med informasjon til, og rett til å begrensning og dataportabilitet. Du har også rett til å rette opp i opplysninger hvis noe har blitt utformet feil, og du har rett til å klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Dersom du ønsker å delta i dette prosjektet kan du skrive under samtykkeerklæringen på neste side og være med på å bidra til videre forståelse og mer kunnskap innen feltet om interkulturell kompetanse i norsk engelskundervisning.

Studien er meldt inn til Sikt – tidligere Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS – som vurderer om behandlingen av personopplysninger fyller krav til personvernet.

Hvis du har spørsmål om prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med masterstudent (Guro Tjernsli) (162162@stud.inn.no eller 45202625) eller veiledere (Knut Øystein Høvik og Björn Sundmark) (knut.hovik@inn.no, bjorn.sundmark@mau.se). Du kan også ta kontakt med personvernombudet ved Høgskolen i Innlandet ved å sende epost til personvern@inn.no.

Forskningsprosjekter ved Høgskolen i Innlandet som skal samle inn informasjon som kan identifisere mennesker må søke godkjenning fra en tjenesteleverandør som heter 'Sikt'. Vi har fått godkjenning fra de på at vi følger god praksis og lovverk for håndtering av personvern i forskning. Dersom du har spørsmål til Sikt som handler om dette prosjektet kan du kontakte dem på e-post (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller telefon 73 98 40 40.

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått den skriftlige informasjonen om prosjektet *Intercultural competence and assessment in upper elementary,* og har fått anledningen til å stille spørsmål til prosjektet og informasjonen som er gitt.

- Jeg samtykker til å delta i et fokusgruppeintervju hvor det blir tatt lydopptak underveis.
- Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger blir behandlet til prosjektet er avsluttet.

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(Signatur av deltaker, dato)