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Teaching culture in the foreign language classroom



Summary

This thesis has investigated the research question “*To what extent and how are culture and intercultural competence treated in two English textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway?*” using theory in the field of intercultural learning from Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018). The way in which the concept of “intercultural competence” is used in the Curriculum in English was also considered. Two English textbooks at the lower secondary school level were used in the analysis: *English 5* and *Explore 5*.

The study found that both textbooks treat cultural and intercultural aspects on the surface level. Both textbooks presents mostly factual knowledge. I did not find much relevant to developing intercultural competence whereas both textbooks leave much of the responsibility for this development to the teachers and the students using the textbooks.

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1. Background

The practice of including cultural aspects such as history, arts and social institutions in foreign language education can be traced back to the teaching of classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, in the 17th and 18th centuries (Kramersch, 1997). According to Kramersch, the purpose of teaching such cultural elements was to give students an “entrance ticket to the universal culture of the European educated elite” (p. 5). Over the years, however, the cultural component of foreign language education has changed, now comprising other elements and including other perspectives - and of course being taught with other purposes in mind. One new element, that has gained prominence in later years is the idea of “intercultural competence” (IC).

The teaching of languages in the Norwegian context has traditionally been heavily dependent on the textbook (Lund, 2020). Therefore, what textbooks include in terms of cultural aspects may therefore have a strong impact on what is actually focused on in the classroom. However, earlier studies have shown that textbooks have made a rather random selection of topics and have provided only a superficial picture of other cultures (Lund, 2006). Therefore, as the introduction of the latest curriculum in Norway (LK20) in 2020 brought a new batch of English language teaching (ELT) textbooks on the market, and into Norwegian classrooms, it is relevant to take a closer look at how these textbooks deal with the cultural dimension of English teaching and learning. This thesis therefore explores the concepts of “culture” and “intercultural competence” in ELT and how English language textbooks in Norway cater for the development of cultural understanding and IC in students in Norway.

1.1 The changing face of culture teaching in EFL

According to Byram (2012), the teaching of “culture” in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom has changed in many ways in recent years. The focus has shifted from linking the English language to the culture of a particular country, and developing students’ knowledge and skills mainly in relation to that language and culture, to focusing on English as a lingua franca, utilized as a contact language between English language users that employ different English variants, and who have different cultural backgrounds (Seidelhofer, 2011). More specifically, until the turn of the millennium, a common perception in foreign language education was that there was only one “target” culture tied to the given language that was to be learned, and that this was a homogenous

culture, making it “the” culture of a country (Byram, 2011, p. 83). Typically, in ELT prior to the 2000s the focus had been on the cultures of Britain and the USA. However, due to globalization, there has been a growing recognition that the teaching of cultural aspects in ELT should not be restricted to the UK and the US (Rindal, 2014), but taking a global approach in the development of culture knowledge.

In Norway, we also see this shift in focus in the teaching of EFL, moving away from a strict focus on the native speaker standard and emphasis on Anglo-American culture, to focusing more on making oneself understood and learning about different English-speaking cultures. For example, before the introduction of the M87 language curriculum, issued in 1987, the central focus was placed on how to speak in the target language (Simensen, 2018). This meant that emphasis was placed on British and US language cultures as reference points in the ELF classroom. In terms of *language* learning, this meant using standard English as the yardstick for teaching and assessment, helping students to develop language skills, having the ‘educated native speaker’ as the ultimate ideal. Similarly, as for *cultural* learning, the US and the UK were the focus of attention (Bøhn & Hansen, 2018, p. 287). Interestingly, “culture” was not explicitly defined in M87, but the focus was put on gaining knowledge related to daily life in these countries, as well as their history, geography and political systems (Simensen, 2018). Moreover, with the introduction of the M87, the emphasis on using language as a tool for communication became more prominent. Consequently, the main objective was to get one’s meaning across, rather than to speak and write accurately. Also, regarding the development of culture knowledge, the curriculum opened up for the learning of cultural content relating to other native-speaking countries than just the USA and Great Britain. This focus on cultural learning related to non-Anglo-American cultures became even more pronounced in the ensuing curricula.

In the present LK-20 curriculum, it is no longer just a matter of learning about ways of living, history, geography etc. in the English-speaking countries. Today, students are also to develop intercultural competence, which requires knowledge of other people’s identities, their ways of communicating, and their thinking about the world (Byram, 2020).

The present thesis takes a closer look at the concepts of “culture” and “intercultural competence” in ELT and how teaching materials developed for the Norwegian context deal with these concepts in the EFL classroom. In order to provide a more comprehensive backdrop for understanding this research focus, I will now go on to present in some more detail how culture and intercultural

competence have been conceptualized in the Norwegian curricula and the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), which has had some influence on language curriculum development in Norway in this area (Simensen, 2018).

1.2 The teaching of culture and intercultural competence in foreign language education

In order to understand how the teaching of culture can be conceptualized in contemporary foreign language education in Norway it is relevant to look at the work of the Council of Europe, since has had an impact on curricula in Norway (Simensen, 2018). According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001; 2018), the main purpose of foreign language teaching is to develop two main competences in language learners: general competence and communicative language competence. The former includes elements such as “knowledge of the world”, “socio-cultural knowledge”, and “intercultural awareness”, whereas the latter involves linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences (Council of Europe, 2001; pp. 101-104, 108-130). More specifically, regarding general competences, the CEFR points out that “factual knowledge concerning the country or countries in which the language is spoken” is important (p. 102). Examples of this may be geographical, demographic, economic and political issues, and in that sense these are knowledge components that are similar to the culture content of traditional ELT. However, the CEFR states that such factual knowledge is not sufficient for developing the general competences needed to communicate well in many contexts. What the language user will often need, then, is *intercultural awareness* (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 103-104). Such awareness can be defined as “knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’ (p. 103). It also entails the ability to discern “how each community appears from the perspective of the other” (p. 103).

This implies that the teaching of “culture” is not limited to knowledge about daily life, history and society, but even issues such as being able to change perspective, or to ‘decenter’, as well as how one could use one’s intercultural awareness to adapt one’s communication to people with different backgrounds. More specifically, *intercultural awareness* means understanding similarities and differences between your own culture and other cultures (Risager, 2007). By practicing this one can develop an attentiveness of one’s own assumptions and beliefs. In addition, *intercultural awareness*

also means being aware of how each individual is shaped by their culture (Dypedahl, 2019). This relates to, among other things, an awareness of how the values, norms and perceptions held by the community or communities which the individual identifies with impact on the individual's own outlook on the world. For example, this could entail alertness to how people from more individualistically-oriented communities tend to place more emphasis on self-realization, whereas members of more collectively-focused cultures usually prioritize group loyalty (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

Interestingly, in Norway, the *Knowledge Promotion* (LK06), followed by the revised *English Subject Curriculum* in 2013 (ENG-03), both had their roots in the CEFR (Simensen, 2018, p. 32). In the LK06, the component *culture, society and literature* was formally introduced. The students were expected to be able to discuss various ways of living and how people interacted in English-speaking countries. ENG-03 stated, for example, that students should be able to "listen to and understand social and geographic variations of English from authentic situations" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013, p. 8). In the LK06 curriculum, which was introduced in 2006, it was explicitly stated that the students were to "develop knowledge of English as a lingua franca", indicating that the goal was not only to communicate with native speakers, but with people from different cultures all over the world (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006). The revised version of the LK06 made it even more explicit how English had become "an international language" pointing to the importance of having "knowledge of how it is used in different contexts." (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013). However, none of these curricula used the term "intercultural" to explain how the non-linguistic aspects of communicative competence were to be developed. Consequently, the term "culture" remained wide and it left much room to interpretation.

The ensuing curriculum, LK20, brought a new dimension, following even more closely the CEFR, establishing intercultural competence as an essential part of the Core element Working with English texts, thus making the development of such competence central to the knowledge and skills that students are to develop in the English language classrooms. Interestingly, the term "intercultural learning" is also used in the introductory text "About the subject", hence further underlining that this dimension is central (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). As for how "intercultural learning" and "IC" are to be understood, the curriculum is not crystal clear, but in the core element Working with English texts it is stated that: "By reflecting on, interpreting and

critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them *to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns*. (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, emphasis added). Actually, the idea of being able to deal with “different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns” may be said to constitute the definition of the concept “intercultural competence” in the Curriculum in English and will therefore take center stage in the analysis in this thesis, as well the term “decentering”. As mentioned, being able to decenter means the ability to shift perspectives and view a situation from other people’s point of view. This ability allows the students to see someone or a situation from multiple angles and may be a prerequisite for understanding, empathy and the ability to communicate and interact appropriately with others.

As for “culture”, this term is introduced in the Core curriculum under “Identity and cultural diversity” and is repeated throughout LK20. In the Core curriculum it is stated that “insight into our history and culture is important for developing the identities of pupils and their belonging in society” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This idea is reiterated in the Curriculum in English under “Relevance and central values” where it is pointed out that the English subject is important “when it comes to cultural understanding.” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Moreover, the cultural aspect is intertwined with other important terms, such as identity.

1.3 Use of textbooks in English language teaching

As mentioned above, previous research has shown that Norwegian teachers of English are highly dependent on the use of the textbook in class (Skjelbred, Solstad & Aamotsbakken, 2005). As this dependency is likely to influence how intercultural competence is dealt with in class, it is relevant to research how textbooks deal with this competence. For students to develop their intercultural competence, the textbook should utilize the terms highlighted by the English curricula (ways of living, mindsets and communication patterns) and promote the students’ ability to gain an outside perspective on differences (decentering). Textbook authors and publishers, however, do not have to answer to any formal, evaluative government body regarding alignment with the aims of the English curricula when writing and publishing textbooks (Lund, 2020). Yet, one may argue that this lack of accountability measures, makes it even more important to investigate how these textbooks

deal with intercultural competence. The teachers depend on them in their teaching, and the students' intercultural competence development is therefore highly affected by these textbooks.

1.3.1 Research focus of the present thesis

Against this backdrop, this thesis will attempt to answer the following research question:

To what extent and how are culture and intercultural competence treated in two English textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway?

Focus will be on the two textbooks *English 5* and *Explore 5*. The way that culture and intercultural competence is manifested in these two books will then be analyzed in view of theoretical perspectives on culture and intercultural competence in the research literature, as well as what the Curriculum LK20 has to say about the matter.

The thesis comprises six chapters. The first chapter provides background for my study and is followed chapter 2 which presents the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 also provides previous research on the field, mostly regarding how intercultural competence has been and is viewed. Chapter 3 discusses my choice of method, which also sheds light on reliability and validity issues in the study. This chapter also presents my analysis of the qualitative data using a hermeneutic approach. Chapter 4 presents my data and findings, as well as a discussion of these findings. It is structured thematically according to the aforementioned four categories of intercultural competence development, i.e. *Ways of living*, *Communication patterns*, *Mindsets* and *Decentering*. Chapter 5 presents my conclusion of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

2. Theory and policy

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for this study. In order to answer the research question, i.e., *to what extent and how culture and intercultural competence are treated in two English textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway*, I have looked at previous research within the areas of intercultural learning and cultural teaching. Since the terms *culture* and *intercultural competence* are the main units of analysis in this thesis, the start of the chapter revolves around definitions of these terms, including a closer look at The Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001; 2018). As I believe an evaluation of the historical development of steering documents in Norway is important for understanding the current foci of ELT in the present context, I have also included a discussion here of previous curricula, homing in on how cultural and intercultural competence have been viewed in the past and their development to the current one. Further, I will provide theory regarding textbooks and their position and function in history and in practice in order to understand the material I will be analyzing further in the research.

2.1 The term *culture*

2.1.1 Conceptualizations of “culture”

The term *culture* is used to describe various phenomena and is therefore a concept which has multiple meanings (Eriksen & Sajjad, 2015). One understanding of the term is that it refers to finer cultural aspects, such as art, literature and classical music. This is sometimes referred to as “Big ‘C’” culture and may be said to concern the “visible aspect of culture” (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 12). However, in the 1970s the cultural definition became expanded, and it was commonly accepted that for example sports could be included in the concept. More broadly, according to Dypedahl, & Lund (2020) it was even seen as relevant to embed the notion of how individuals think and act as members of a community. Consequently, one may argue that more invisible aspects of culture such as communication patterns, values and norms were included in the definition. This is referred to as “small ‘c’” culture (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 13).

The idea that culture involves “learned and shared perceptions about beliefs, values and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 25) is a notion taken from anthropology, which has been a research area providing theoretical and empirical knowledge in the field of intercultural communication (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017). Hannerz (1992)

explains how this notion has three dimensions. These dimensions include ideas and modes of thought, forms of externalization and social distribution (p. 7). He introduced these dimensions to describe how cultures interact and influence each other. One aspect is "cultural diffusion", which according to Hannerz means that cultures are not static but constantly evolving through spreading cultural elements. By this he means that cultural attributes develop both through the minds of individuals, as well as through public discourses, and spread through social relationships. In this sense, the perceptions of a group of people may actually affect the way these individuals act, i.e. communicate and interact with others, and this is why knowledge of such perceptions may be important for someone who is learning to communicate in another language.

In another conceptualization of the term *culture*, Street (1993) claims that "culture is a verb". He explains this as:

In fact, there is not much point in trying to say what culture is. What can be done, however, is to say what culture does. For what culture does is precisely the work of defining words, ideas, things and groups. We all live our lives in terms of definitions, names and categories that culture creates. The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons. These definitions are used, change and sometimes fall into disuse. Indeed, the very term 'culture' itself, like these other ideas and definitions, changes its meanings and serve different often competing purposes at different times. Culture is an active process of meaning making and contest over definition, including its own definition (p. 25).

By stating this, Street deemphasizes the notion that culture is inherited, and stresses how it can be seen as "a signifying process – the active construction of meaning" (Street, 1993, p. 23). In other words, in relating to cultural artifacts, symbols and human interactions, individuals construct and reconstruct meaning in an ongoing process. Street also links the term *culture* to the term *discourse*, as culture is in motion and can be shaped by individuals. Both Hannerz (1992) and Street's (1993) theoretical reflections on culture also provide some interesting practical implications for teachers of English. One such implication is the idea that language and cultural didactics should be linked to procedural knowledge, that is, knowledge of *how* to develop cultural knowledge. Language education creates opportunities for pupils to experience culture in different ways and to raise their understanding of themselves as individuals and as members of different groups. However, in order for students to acquire knowledge in this area, teachers must work on developing cultural awareness in their teaching and help students to engage with 'otherness' in the way it is manifested in different

communities and cultural groups. Therefore, one needs to open up for a diversified, rather than a narrow view on language and culture (Hannerz, 1992). This is supported by the Council of Europe (2001; 2018), as mentioned earlier, which stresses how cultural teaching should transcend a target culture. By asking questions, making the students reflect over differences and expose them to oral and written texts from a range of *different* backgrounds, their learning may transcend from learning a language to developing important life skills to function in a diverse society.

Culture in the sense of patterns of thinking and behavior that groups of people have in common can be identified on different levels. According to Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy (2014), it is relatively easy to notice cultural differences on the ‘surface’ level, in terms of clothing, language and customs. However, on a deeper level, it is harder to identify how a person thinks. This includes their perceptions of the world, beliefs, values and norms. This can be illustrated by “the cultural iceberg”. Above the ‘surface’ we may observe cultural traits that are visible, such as clothing, cuisine, and rituals, which are aspects that are likely to change more rapidly (Samovar et al. 2014). Below the surface, however, we find deep cultural structures which encompass the layers of meaning, symbolism, and values associated with objects, words, and concepts within a culture. These meanings are often deeply ingrained and may not be apparent to outsiders, but still play a significant role in shaping cultural identity and behavior.

Moreover, these aspects, visual or not, mean that we are all carriers of culture. However, culture is as stated previously not static, but dynamic. Consequently, one should not assume that a cultural trait found to be characteristic of the majority of individuals in a cultural group will be characteristic of this group forever. Neither is it safe to think that this cultural trait generalizes to all members of the group. Nevertheless, as in line with common practice in many social sciences dealing with the general tendency of phenomena, one may hold that a cultural characteristic found to be typical of certain society (such as individualism in the US, cf. Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) may give us an indication that this cultural value tends to affect the mindset of many Americans (just as the opposite, i.e. collectivism, will affect many people’s mindset in Guatemala, Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

But who influences our view on culture and how we view each other? Dypedahl and Bøhn (2017) point out three dominant sources: the family, school and the community (p. 60). In these three institutions, individuals are generally socialized into thinking in certain ways about the world: what is good and bad, true and false, accepted and not accepted etc. Being socialized into these

institutions from early on, we commonly take their value systems for granted and become unaware of how they affect our mindsets, including our identities, and the way we interact with others, as well as how these value systems may be different from those of institutions elsewhere. And in terms of identity, it is relevant to discuss how "individuals portray themselves within different groups of people" (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 62). Identity is therefore linked to group identity, and one individual can identify with a range of different roles at the same time, like being a parent and a schoolteacher, for example. Based on the complexity of identity, one can reflect over how a person can be regarded as a "culture of one's own" (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 62).

Integrating the above-mentioned perspectives with Street's (1993) idea that culture is dynamic, one may consider the concept to be flexible, but still as an integrated system of learned behavior and thinking patterns. These patterns reflect who you are and establish you as a member of a society. This includes "knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notion of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people during generations through individual and group striving" (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2014). Interestingly, this is also how culture is regarded in the Curriculum in English in LK20, where it relates to "ways of living, mindsets, and communication styles".

Traditionally, as touched upon above, there has been a sense that there is a strong link between language and culture. As Kuang (2007, p.75) pointed out: "Language is the carrier of culture and culture is the content of language". Similarly, as Tomalin puts it: " Culture is considered a fifth language skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. (Tomalin, 2008). According to this view, then, teaching could be a way of enhancing the authenticity of communication. Whenever students have good grasp of the culture(s) of the language in which a text is written, they may more successfully comprehend the text. Teaching culture is also a strategy to develop authentic communication. Knowledge of the mindsets and communication styles of the users of the language may make verbal and non-verbal interaction with those users more 'realistic' and genuine. ELT is therefore dependent on the teaching of culture, as the students will be more able to successfully understand English texts and communication. However, in order to cater for the *intercultural* aspects of communication, and the notion of decentering, culture should be taught by teachers who are aware of their own culture as well as their students' culture. Teachers are role models, and it is therefore crucial that they teach culture in a manner that provides knowledge of different cultures in English speaking countries, as well as the

ability to change perspective from oneself to that of others. This supports language learning by providing different perspectives and open new borders of ways of living (Mustafaqulova, 2022).

2.1.2 The concept of "culture" in the curriculum

As mentioned previously, Norwegian curricula have previously viewed culture as an important aspect in all subjects (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 1990). They have highlighted how important it is for students to get to know their own culture and points of view. As discussed in Chapter 1., however, cultural learning has seen a shift of focus in foreign language education. Previously, the cultural content revolved around knowledge about English-speaking countries, and the focus, overall, lay more on grammar and vocabulary learning than on non-language features. This perspective on cultural learning in foreign language education in Norway is evident from the 1974 curricula (Risager, 1989). The curriculum of 1987 (M87), however, brought a change in the language norm and introduced English as something international (Simensen, 2018, p. 30). A central focus in this and the subsequent curricula (R-94 and L97) was the focus on learning about target culture of the language. This meant that the focus was on how the target culture and its language use was the reference point for how one should speak. In the case of learning English, this applied to British and American English and their standard accent (Bøhn & Hansen, 2018, p. 287). Based on this, culture was not explicitly defined in M87, but the focus lay on the function of the language and how to speak "correct English". However, it was the starting point for the focus on intercultural competence as the students were supposed to be able to, for example, "ask for and express concepts and viewpoints, attitudes and opinions" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 1990, p. 225). The 1994 English curriculum also had very specific learning objectives tied to the USA and the Great Britain. It supported the ideas from M87 which implied the importance of knowledge of the target culture in order to develop advanced language proficiency. Again, we can see the strong hold on "target language culture" in earlier English teaching. However, the focus shifted with the LK06, not only to a stronger emphasis on culture overall, but also to a more global perspective on culture (Risager, 2021). One specific example of this in the LK06, was the above-mentioned component *culture, society and literature*, which stressed the interrelationship between language and culture, broadly understood. Thus, one may also hold that culture teaching has shifted from fact-based knowledge, referred to as "Big C" culture (arts, literature, monuments) to a "small c" which revolves around norms, habits and traditions (Risager, 2018). This is also seen in the present LK20 Curriculum in English, in which acquiring knowledge of different people's *ways of living* is an important aspect of the English subject (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

2.2 The term Intercultural competence

2.2.1 What is intercultural competence? (IC)

Intercultural competence, or intercultural understanding, may be said to be the primary goal of culture didactics in language teaching and learning in the present LK-20 curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This requires insight which is gained through communication and contact with others who have a different view on the world (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2014). By “communication and contact” one may include engagement with texts, which doesn’t require face-to-face interaction with people from other cultures. An important point here, however, is that engaging with individuals or texts who have different views of the world, introduces the learners to different types of mindsets, as Dypedahl, (2019), puts it. And as pointed out already this is a core component of intercultural competence, according to the Curriculum in English, together with “ways of living” and “communication patterns”. However, to be able to view the world through the lens of others, one must be able to reflect and adapt. This is then what we have referred to as *decentering*, which means the ability to change perspectives (Byram, 2020; Dypedahl, 2019; Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017). Therefore, I choose to include this term as an important element of intercultural competence, in addition to those three aspects of the curriculum mentioned above.

More broadly, “intercultural competence” is a compound term consisting of the words “inter”, “culture” and “competence” (Dahl, 2013). To get a broader understanding of the concept, I find it relevant to briefly explore these ‘subcomponents’ in some more detail. According to Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (2023), *inter* means “between” or “mutual”. This makes sense, as Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (2023) describes the term “intercultural” as something “existing or happening between different cultures”. Differences in culture and cultural identities is something each student will encounter, and the ability to be “intercultural” can therefore be linked to the ability to interact and adapt “between” cultures.

Beyond this, the concept of *competence* is an interesting one, since it occupies such a pivotal position in the LK20 curricula. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training describes the term *competence* as “the ability to gain and use knowledge and skill to master challenges and solve different tasks in known and unknown contexts and situations” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This indicates that students should develop insight and the ability to reflect and develop critical thinking. It also implies the ability to know and understand facts, terms,

theory, ideas and contexts within different themes and areas. The focus on competence in the Norwegian educational system is interesting in the sense that it is very much used in literature on intercultural learning. Similar to the way competence is defined in LK20, definitions of intercultural competence in the literature typically includes element related to *knowledge* and *abilities* (Deardorff, 2006). I turn to this issue in the next section.

2.2.2 Ways of conceptualizing intercultural competence

Byram (1997) is one of the most quoted publications on intercultural learning in education, and his model, which I present below, has served as a starting point for other models of intercultural competence in the field. Byram defines intercultural competence as “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing other’s values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing oneself. He continues arguing that “the basis of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the person interacting with people from another culture” (p. 52), thus indication that attitudes are an important ingredient, in addition to knowledge and skills. Deardorff (2006) defines intercultural competence as “ the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions. ”

Dypedahl (2019), which largely build on Byram (1997) and Deardorff’s (2006) models, defines intercultural competence as “the ability to relate constructively with people who have mindsets and/or communication styles that are different from one’s own” (p. 102). He points out that such an ability includes knowledge of how mindsets, such as beliefs, values and norms, influence how we view the world and how we communicate. Communication styles, then, means the fundamental ways of communicating with others, for example speaking directly or indirectly, formally or informally. In other words, intercultural competence may guide us to identify these different styles of communication and benefit us when interacting. Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl’s (2018) definitions of intercultural competence all have in common that they emphasize the importance of knowledge of other cultures and an open mindset, which the latter of which may be a prerequisite for successful understanding, and consequently communication.

Elaborating on Dypedahl’s (2018) model, Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) argue that intercultural competence requires basic communicative competence, which again can be divided into four components (p. 15). These components consist of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980, in Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 15). Learning a language is

therefore linked to intercultural competence. However, communicative competence is not enough for developing intercultural competence, but it is a basis for evolvement. Language itself opens the world and enables a wider perspective on life across borders (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 152). I will return to these points when describing Dypedahl's (2018) communicative competence model in section 2.2.3. This perspective on language learning creates both a need to understand a new culture as well as an opportunity for new insights in other behavioral patterns and communication styles (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 149). A challenge with language learning and the development of intercultural competence, however, is that the number of sub-components which constitute such competence is near to infinite. As is stated in the Common European Framework of Reference: "all human competences may be regarded as contributing to a language learner's ability to communicate" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 101) However, in the Norwegian educational context, it is the curriculum which defines what is to be focused on in the classroom, and it may broadly be said to narrow down the scope to those linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences mentioned above.

The combination of knowledge, skill and attitudes, as emphasized by Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018) ties the term *intercultural competence* together as a dynamic type of competence which will never reach completion but is in constant development. Claire Kramsch (2011) introduced the concept of "a third culture" (p. 356), which also points to a dynamic understanding of the terms *culture* and *intercultural competence*. It explains how a new culture is developing when people meet and interact. For example, two people with widely different cultural backgrounds may in their interactions develop particular habits of communication and interaction, such as a special form of greeting, which are common to neither of their culture(s) of origin. Thus, this type of greeting will be a manifestation of their own 'third' culture. The term *third culture*, then, is meant to symbolize a dynamic interaction between humans and discard the terms "my culture" and "your culture". Instead, the focus lies on how one engages with a shifting and complex reality (Kramsch, 2011, p. 356). The development of third cultures is then something that language learners should be made aware of, and encourage, and should therefore be in focus in the ESL classroom.

2.2.3 Models of intercultural competence

As alluded to above, in order to acknowledge and assess intercultural competence in practice, various models have been developed for this purpose. In this study, I will analyze two English textbooks and how they treat these concepts and will use intercultural competence models to investigate the topic further. In order to do so, I found the intercultural competence models by

Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018) valuable for my research and will therefore explain these further. I will outline what I found most relevant for my analysis in bullet points.

Byram's (1997) intercultural competence model uses the term "intercultural communicative competence" (ICC), which is composed of a communicative component and an intercultural competence component. The communicative competence component comprises linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence as the three dominant pillar stones, similar to the ones mentioned in relation to Dypedahl's (2018) description above. The first one, linguistic competence, is understood as the foundation for being able to communicate precisely and accurately (Simensen, 2007). It includes "knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation and orthography as well as sentence structure and morphology" (Simensen, 2007, p. 108). The second one, sociolinguistic competence, concerns "mastery of the language forms and meaning that are appropriate in different contexts" (Simensen, 2007, p.108). This includes the formal and informal, direct and indirect way of communicating. This competence is the ability to shift the form of the language depending on who one is communicating with. For example, one way of speaking can be appropriate within a group of friends but inappropriate in the workplace. Sociolinguistic competence also includes speech acts, such as apologizing (Simensen, 2007). Finally, discourse competence concerns "the ability to receive and to produce connected texts" (Simensen, 2007, p. 109). An important aspect of such competence is the language learners ability to create *coherence* and *cohesion* in a spoken or written text.

As for the intercultural component in Byram's (1997) model, this also consists of three components, namely knowledge, skills and attitudes. These components are supplemented by five "saviors". These five saviors are attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness. Knowledge will equip the individual with information vital for understanding why others act and speak differently. It includes knowing oneself and being aware of relations others have to other societies. The skill of interpreting will enable an individual to compare other cultures to one's own and develop new perspectives by comparing and contrasting one's own and others' cultures. This is again linked to critical cultural awareness and the notion of viewing not only other cultures, but also one's own, in a critical light. Skills of discovery refer to the ability to acquire knowledge through interaction and being exposed to cultural practices operating in real-time communication. As the model below shows, these components are interrelated. Attitudes relates to mindset and is vital for being open to differences and being able to adapt out of curiosity. This includes the ability to decenter, which means having a

metaperspective on others and being able to engage with the unfamiliar with openness. Intercultural attitudes involve valuing the attitudes and beliefs of others.

Figure 1. The Intercultural Communicative Competence Model (Byram, 1997, p. 34)

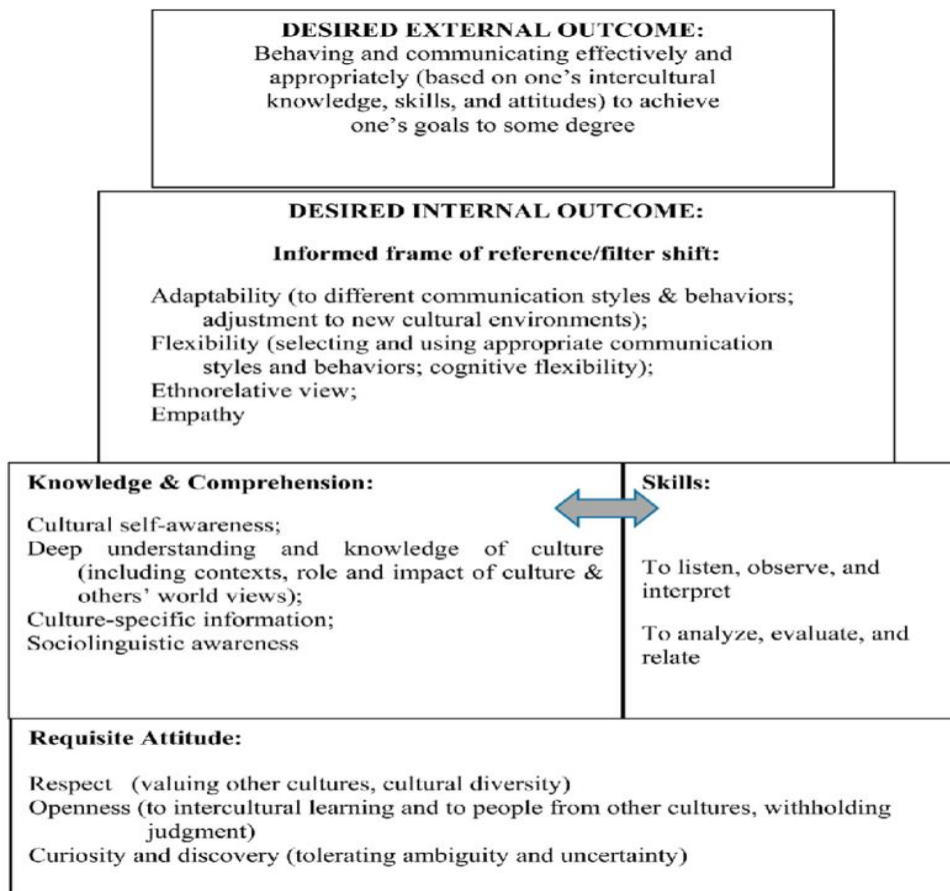
	Skills interpret and relate (<i>savoir comprendre</i>)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (<i>savoirs</i>)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (<i>savoir s'engager</i>)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (<i>savoir être</i>)
	Skills Discover and/or interact (<i>savoir apprendre /faire</i>)	

Based on this intercultural competence model, I want to address the components Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills further as I find these most relevant to my analysis of the two textbooks. The first component, *Knowledge*, says something about the importance of how the learner needs to have knowledge of social groups and societies. This includes stereotypes, how one views oneself and others, knowledge regarding social processes and social interaction. A textbook can work on this component by providing different facts through text, visual aids and discovery through stereotypical thinking and reflection. Secondly, *attitudes* is the second component highly relevant to my study and it says something about values. This includes the ability to decenter, change perspectives and be open to other cultures and beliefs. This ability can be trained through brainstorming. The brainstorming process could be reading about other people's lives and other cultures and creating curiosity and reflection through both visual aids and written texts. These texts can, for example, revolve around other students' everyday lives. I interpret *Skills* as how the students interpret the information they learn and how able they are at interacting through differences.

In an alternative intercultural competence model, Deardorff (2006) takes as a starting point Byram's (1997) conceptualizations and refines and expands on these. Deardorff's definition of intercultural competence has been developed from interviews with experts in the area and how they understand

the concept (Dypedahl, 2019). On the basis of the definition, Deardorff (2006) presents two complementary models, a pyramid model and a process model, which together addresses a total of 22 elements that are seen as relevant for developing intercultural competence. The difference between the two models is that the pyramid model (Figure 2, below) consists of five components, arranged as building blocks, where "attitudes" is the foundation to build intercultural competence components upon. The component Skills and knowledge is viewed as co-dependent for achieving the "desired internal outcome". The process model, on the other hand, comprises four components arranged in a circular fashion. This model also takes "attitudes" as a starting point but stresses more clearly how the development of intercultural competence is a process through which one may develop one's skills and knowledge in a cyclical fashion.

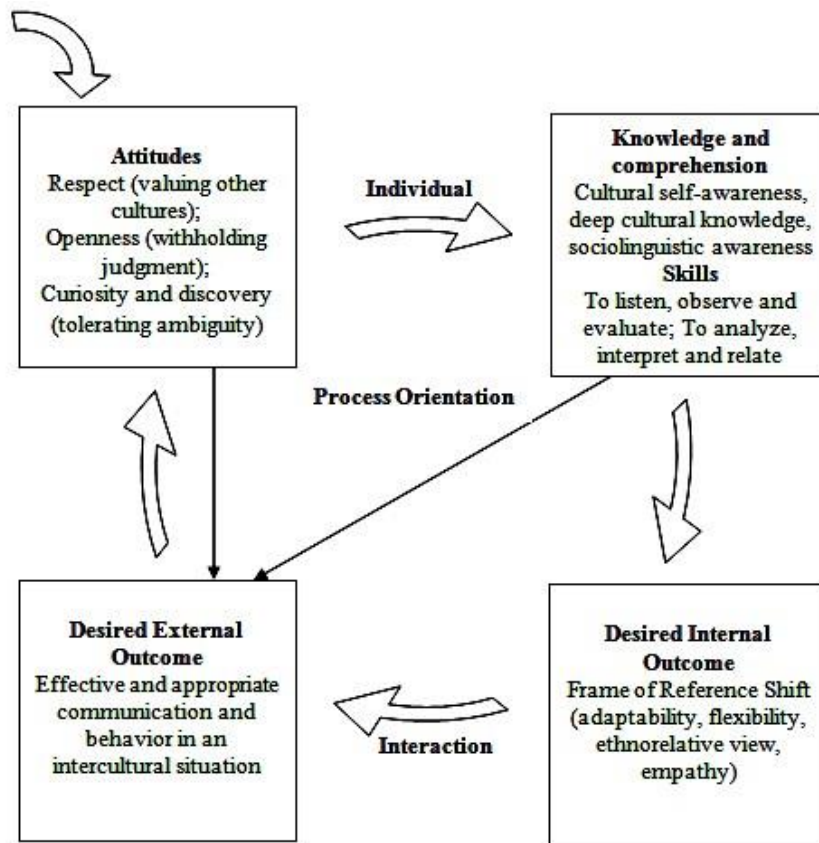
Figure 2. The Pyramid Model (Deardorff, 2006, p. 196)



- Move from personal level (attitude) to interpersonal/interactive level (outcomes)
- Degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of underlying elements

As can be seen in Figure 3, the foundation of the pyramid in the Pyramid model is the "Requisite Attitude" box, which states that this component is required in order to move further into intercultural competence development. This component comprises respect, openness, curiosity and discovery as the fundamental skills set for students to begin with. The idea of valuing other cultures, learning from others and tolerating differences as being a part of someone's attitude is a valuable conceptualization of attitudes which I will use in my analysis further on.

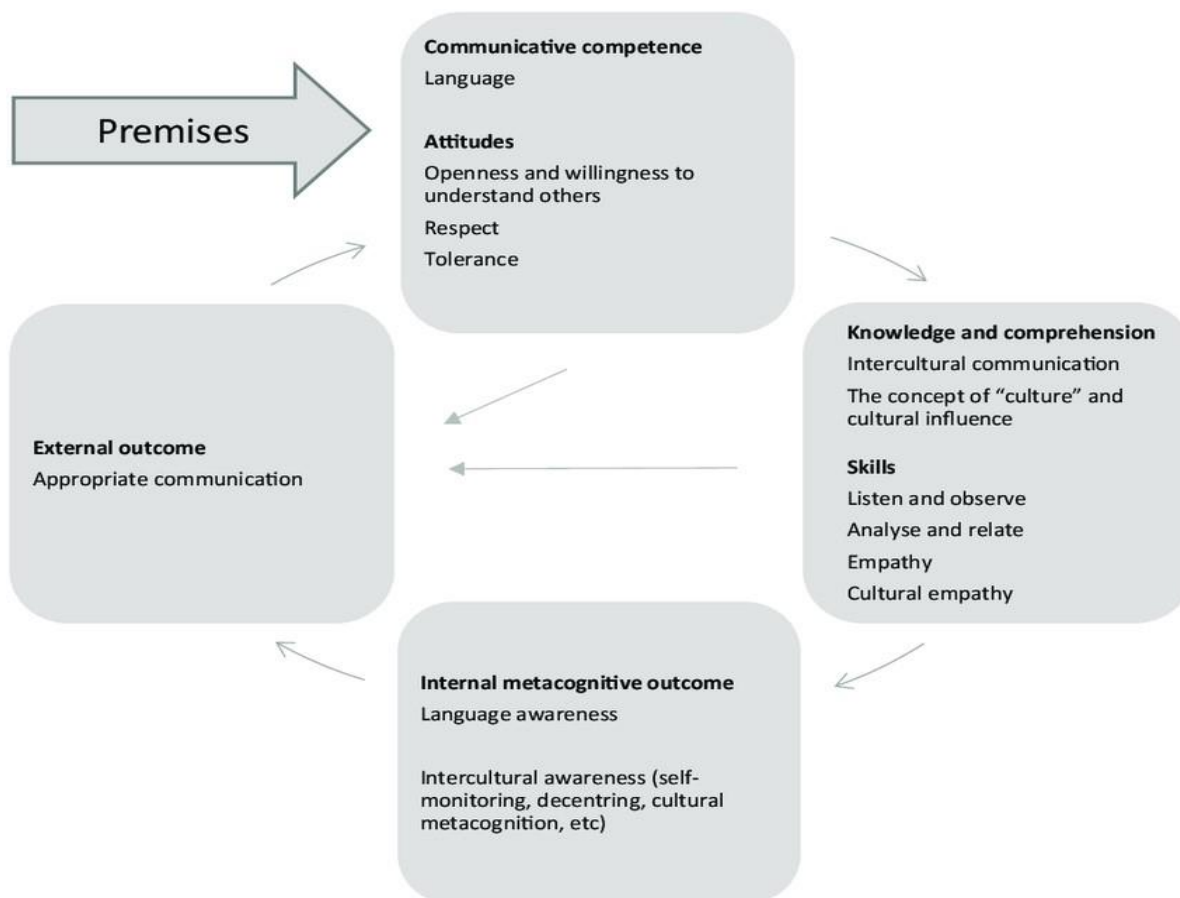
Figure 3. The Process model (Deardorff, 2006, p. 198)



As can be seen in Figure 3, the process model includes the same categories as the Pyramid model. However, this model demonstrates that the development of intercultural competence is a *process* and points out that there are different degrees of competence in each category. The model also understands the component “Attitudes” as the first step on the path to intercultural competence, which leads to knowledge and comprehension.

Dypedahl (2018) also created an intercultural competence model based on the ideas from Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006). The model consists of four main components arranged in the form of a circle. Figure 4 gives an overview of its design.

Figure 4. The Intercultural Competence Learning Cycle (Dypedahl, 2018)



The first box is the starting point for understanding the development of intercultural competence and is labelled “Communicative competence”. It highlights that linguistic competence is, as touched upon earlier, necessary for good communication (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 86). This is supported by The Council of Europe (2018) stating how intercultural competence “is always combined with communicative language competences” (p. 29). This box also demonstrates the importance of attitudes, such as a positive mindset and openness towards others. The next box is labelled “Knowledge and comprehension” and is directed towards intercultural communication with emphasis on skills such as empathy, listening and observation. This again leads to the next box, “Internal outcome”, which refers to the internal process of metacognitive intercultural awareness. It includes self-monitoring and decentering, something an individual needs in order to adjust their way of communication. The focus on metacognition in language learning has increased considerably in the past two decades (Haukås, 2018). Metacognition refers to an individual’s degree of insight into

their own thought processes (Flavell, 2004), and can be trained through raising awareness and reflection. The idea that metacognition is an important part of intercultural competence is also supported by Sercu (2004) who argued that metacognition should be a part of the models illustrating intercultural competence (p. 76). This idea also aligns with Bøhn and Dypedahl's (2018) view that individuals must be able to "think" interculturally. Finally, the internal outcome leads to an external outcome, which is appropriate communication.

The three models by Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018) are similar in the sense that they include many of the same components. Overall, 'attitudes', 'knowledge' and 'skills' are all given prominent positions in the three frameworks. *Attitudes* seems to be the main factor for developing intercultural competence in all three models, as this aspect is positioned as the first component, providing a base for the rest of the categories. This is most clearly visualized in the pyramid model by Deardorff (2006), where attitudes is the foundation block of the pyramid. Deardorff's process model (2006) and Dypedahl's learning cycle (2018) also begins with the component attitudes. In addition, *knowledge* and *skills* are emphasized in the three frameworks, pointing to the fact that the notion of 'competence' typically presupposes know-how and the ability to carry out certain tasks. Beyond this, the three models are also similar in the sense that they all include internal and external outcomes when working with intercultural competence. This demonstrates how intercultural competence does not only require knowledge towards different cultures, but also how individual within a culture is different. Based on this, one must be able to adapt to individuals rather than cultural groups and societies when interacting.

Intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes, then, are all important for learners who want to navigate within and across cultures. The ability to communicate effectively between cultures, being intercultural, is treated as a competence one must gain through practice. Consequently, language learning in school must provide opportunities for students so that they can engage with "otherness", as Byram (1997), puts it, getting the opportunity to develop their understanding of, and cultural empathy towards, individuals with different cultural backgrounds. This is highly relevant for my own analysis of the two English textbooks. When analyzing the textbooks, I will look for how intercultural competence is dealt with through how they encourage students to be open and curious, respect for other cultures by raising awareness through knowledge and attitude such as interpretation and reflection. Interestingly, as I will return in the next section, the conceptualizations of intercultural competence presented in the current section, largely correspond with how the English curriculum views these terms.

2.2.4 Conceptualizations of intercultural competence in the curriculum

As already mentioned, the definition of intercultural competence in the Curriculum in English (LK20) focuses on “ways of living”, “mindsets” and “communication patterns”. In addition, as mentioned in section 2.2.1, above, there are reasons for also including the concept of “decentering” as a part of a language user’s intercultural competence, and, as we shall see, there is evidence that this concept is also manifested in the curriculum. In the following, I will further explain how the above-mentioned aspects are reflected in the curriculum and show how they can be understood by examining them in the light of theoretical perspectives found in Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018). As “decentering” can also be said to constitute an important aspect of language users’ communicative competence (see section 2.2.1, above), this term will also be explored.

2.2.4.1 *Ways of living*

The focus on “ways of living” in the core element Working with texts in English is not further specified in that passage, but one may assume that it refers to different aspects of the everyday lives of people in their context of residence. Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) state that “high levels of cultural empathy require good knowledge of other people’s background or of the context in which they live” (p. 92). Learning different ways of living can help students understand other people’s frames of reference. In order to do so, one must know various facts that are important for understanding why other people live the way they do. By facts, I mean choices people make that make a difference in how they choose to express themselves. This includes how they dress, what hobbies they have, if they express religious traits somehow and what they work with. This is an insider view of a society and allows students to relate to one another. Knowledge of ways of living can entail both ‘minor’ cultural traits such as food choices to more profound aspects such as important events in the history of a group of people. In my textbook analysis, I will examine both types of cultural traits, as I believe that each of them can provide relevant knowledge of the way of living in a given society. They also serve as a starting point for comparing and contrasting the cultural traits of the society in question with those of the students’ own culture. For example, if the textbooks provides knowledge of facts relating to a country or a city, the students can draw comparisons between the described aspects of the ‘target’ culture and their own familiar culture. This can lead to the students becoming familiar with various ways of relating to issues that on the overall level are universal (such as

family, work and rites of passage), but on the local level are manifested in different ways (core vs extended family, types of jobs, different ways of celebrating weddings etc.).

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) highlights the importance of working with the interdisciplinary topics using teachings aids. These interdisciplinary topics include "health and life skills" and "democracy and citizenship" and can also be valuable for intercultural competence development. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) states that "Health and skill can provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns", as well as how the ability to "handle situations that require linguistic and cultural competence can give pupils a sense of achievement". Similarly, under "Democracy and citizenship" the issue of world views is emphasized, including the notion that such views are culture dependent. It is also stipulated that the subject English should provide the students with opportunities to "experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). For the subject English this means that the textbooks should include texts which deal with these themes, enabling students to work creatively and critically through interpretation, reformulation, and make them discuss dilemmas and alternatives. One way of doing this, according to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020), is to facilitate for the acquisition of knowledge and English competence outside of school.

2.2.4.2 Communication patterns

When it comes to communication patterns, the curriculum is not quite clear on this score either, as it does not elaborate much on what it means. However, according to Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) it has to do with "how people express themselves, verbally and non-verbally" (p. 82). For example, some may speak directly and expressively, while others would express themselves indirectly, as they worry their communication partner would be offended by a direct tone. Risager (2007) conducted a study which concluded that a certain way of communicating is not necessarily linked to culture, as one may have one's own individual differences in communication. This is a dynamic look on communication, as the power lies within the individual and not as a whole national culture. On the other hand, according to scholars like Ting-Toomey & Dorjee (2018), culture can be a strong predictor of how directly or indirectly individuals communicate, thereby supporting the assumption that this is a cultural trait that it is worth being aware of when interacting across cultures. For my own analysis, I acknowledge that there are individual differences, and that generalizing a certain

communication pattern to all members of a given culture is highly problematic. Nevertheless, I believe that it is relevant to include a feature such as direct vs indirect communication in intercultural training for students, in order to make them reflect on their own communication and that of others in the light of possible differences.

Communication patterns would also include cultural riddles, idioms or sayings relevant to successful communication. Without knowledge of this, communicators can find themselves not understanding the true meaning behind a conversation. This can also refer to how someone would speak differently to their teacher or their parent than to their friends or when chatting online, in terms of accents, formality and slang. Dypedahl (2018) highlights this communicative competence as a vital part of intercultural competence. These are important when understanding the conversation itself and learning that language is more than just words. Language is the expression of mood, wants and emotion. In order to develop students' competence in this area one should introduce them to, and let them explore, context-relevant expressions, such as various forms of polite phrases. Byram (1997) portrayed this as skills of discovery and interaction, while Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018) explained it through the component "desired external outcome" which elaborates how one can "communicate appropriately".

2.2.4.3 Mindsets

As with both "ways of living" and "communication patterns", the curriculum does not elaborate on the term "mindsets" either, but I found Deardorff's (2006) definition helpful when explaining it here. Deardorff states that "respect" as in "valuing other cultures and cultural diversity", openness and withholding judgement to curiosity and discovery through "tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty" is all a matter of mindset. This is also found in Byram (1997) and Dypedahl's (2018) idea of "attitudes", which is linked to the idea of being open-minded and having the ability to enter into a conversation out of curiosity.

Moreover, according to Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020), mindsets can more generally be understood as different ways of thinking (p. 82). This may include world views, values, norms and perceptions. They elaborate on this by stating how "our mindsets are strongly affected by different socialization processes, for example in the family, at school and through the media" and include norms, values, attitudes and beliefs as parts of this influencing (p. 82). One important issue to how our mindsets are vital for developing intercultural competence, is to restrain from prejudice and stereotypical

thinking. A stereotype can be defined as a simplified, generalized description of a group of people (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 39). The lack of individual variation causes oversimplified versions of “us” and “them”. However, stereotypical perceptions are something we all carry with us as we tend to categorize our thought processes. On the one hand, stereotypical thinking is therefore somewhat necessary to make sense of the world around us. It can be a guidance in terms of behavior and how to relate to someone else. Stereotypes can be divided into two categories, normative and personal. Normative stereotypes are the picture you carry of a group of people you never directly interacted with and therefore generalize on the basis of what you have heard about these people. Personal stereotypes, on the other hand, is stereotypes you acquire based on your own personal experience and contact.

Stereotypes are problematic in the sense that the generalizations seldom allow for individual variation, and that they often do not correspond very well with reality. Moreover, negative stereotypes typically lead to prejudice. This causes negative emotions and skepticism towards people from other and hamper communication and interaction (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). Dypedahl and Bøhn (2017) state that intercultural competence may not hinder instinctive reactions towards other cultures, but knowledge of our own skepticism can make communication easier (p. 45). I interpret this as reminder that textbooks need to engage with different types thinking towards stereotypes and prejudice and to make students reflect on how they would describe someone else or someone else’s culture, particularly regarding the extent to which their thinking allows for individual variation.

The less one knows about another culture, the greater the skepticism (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 43). By learning more about a culture or a country’s history, one may positively change own’s own mindset and become more self-reflexive in one’s own thinking. Critical thinking is also an important component associated with ICC and needs to be practiced through reflection. In-depth reflections on cultural history, like the history of racism, could lead to critical thinking which again could minimize prejudice and discriminatory value judgements towards others. That is because their mindset has developed from an ignorant state of mind to a reflective and critical way of thinking towards others and history.

2.2.4.4 Decentering

As pointed out above, the ability to decenter involves being capable of changing perspectives (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 167). This can be related to the passages in the Curriculum in English

which mention understanding others and developing empathies. Moreover, the ability to decenter is linked to metacognitive competence, as the individual needs to analyze their form of communication with others and regulate themselves in terms of how they want their communication to be perceived by the recipient. It also means moving away from one's own ethnocentric position and to take on the perspective of others, which is central to good intercultural competence (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 169). As this is so central for intercultural learning (Dypedahl, 2018), I wanted to include this category in addition to the explicit categories of ways of living, communication patterns and mindsets in the curriculum.

One form of decentering is learning about people's frames of references. The goal is to get an "insider-view" on aspects of history, society, literature and so on (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 171). For example, learning why 17th of May is an important date to Norwegians can be relevant for non-Norwegians in order to understand cultural references to this festive occasion in the media and in communication. This may cause students to be able to change perspectives and by that adapt their form of communication. This is linked to metacognitive cultural awareness in Dypedahl (2018). Therefore, it is beneficial for the skill of decentration to look at how textbooks contribute to the students' metacognitive learning (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 154).

Ideas regarding "decentering" and knowledge about other people's way of thinking and acting is also mentioned indirectly in the Core curriculum under "identity and cultural diversity" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). It states that "throughout history the Norwegian society has been influenced by different trends and cultural traditions. In a time when the population is more diversified than ever before, and where the world is coming closer together, language skills and cultural understanding are growing in importance. School shall support the development of each person's identity, make the pupils confident in who they are, and also present common values that are needed to participate in this diverse society and to open doors to the world and the future" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 6). This emphasizes the importance of providing students with the tools they need to partake in a society founded on diversity and openness. The students must be given "insights into how we live together with different perspectives, attitudes and views of life" as well as confidence in using their language "to think, create meaning, communicate and connect with others" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 6).

2.2.5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that culture and intercultural competence intertwine, and that, at least in the Norwegian context, they both revolve around the concepts of *ways of living*, *mindsets*, *communication patterns* and *decentering*. As I view culture as a process and a verb, I do not perceive culture as not something that an individual is mentally programmed with and therefore cognitively fixed for life. On the contrary, culture is something developed during a lifetime. It is shaped by the people you meet, the places you visit and the unfamiliar situations you encounter. And the people with whom you identify will highly likely belong to different groups, which are also multifaceted and in transition. Thus, cultures evolve and they may even develop in encounters between people, as is captured in Kramsch's (2011) idea of a "third culture". Still, there may be characteristics shared by certain individuals in a cultural group (such as a collectivistic mindset, or a direct communication pattern, cf. Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018) which it may be worth knowing something about when interacting and communicating interculturally, keeping in mind of course that cultures are diverse and that they do evolve.

Finally, as a comment on the purpose of this thesis, I would like to highlight the importance of *attitudes* for developing student's intercultural competence. Despite the fact that knowledge and skills are obviously important for developing intercultural awareness, the emphasis attributed to attitudes in the intercultural competence models described above, as well as in the English curricula, indicate that they may be a starting point for work with intercultural skills in the English language classroom. Consequently, by trying to entice students to be open and curious, which is Byram's (1997) definition of attitudes, it may create an important foundation for developing students' deeper understanding different "ways of living", "communication patterns" and "mindsets", as well their ability to "decenter".

2.3 The English textbook

2.3.1 Use of textbooks in education

In this study I will discuss some important issues related to learning materials and how they may contribute to enhancing students' learning outcomes. "Teaching materials" is a common term for resources used to gain knowledge and increase learning potential. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2021) defines such materials as all the published, non-published and digital elements developed to use for educational purposes. In the present thesis, the focus is on a sub-type of teaching materials, namely the *textbook*. The term *textbook* represents books made for students

and their learning, with systematic content and additional tasks. Despite the availability of multiple online and offline resources, the textbook stands as the dominant used source in the classroom besides the teachers and students (Bachmann, 2004). It is also the textbook that receives the most attention before, during and after a classroom session (Nelson, 2006). According to Skjelbred, Solstad and Aamotsbakken (2005) the textbook is the most important teaching aid when teachers plan their teaching practices. As many as 87% of teachers primarily used the textbook when planning their tutoring and over 75% had the pupils work with the text or following task from the textbook in class (Bachmann, 2005).

The use of textbook in language teaching goes back to the 1900s. The textbooks *The Principles of Language Study* by Harold E. Palmer in 1922 and *How to Teach a Foreign Language* by Otto Jespersen in 1904 are two of the first textbooks in the discipline (Simensen, 2018, p. 18). As studies have revealed the textbook as a dominant teaching material in today's school, it would be natural to expect the textbook to meet the need of students and the LK20's focus on culture and intercultural competence. According to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2021) teaching materials are to meet the needs of both students and teachers so that the learning aims of the curriculum can be attained. However, in January 2021, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training conducted a study which concluded that many schools lack the financial support to renew their teaching material according to LK20 (Vik, 2021). It also revealed that many schools do not invest in new learning aids, such as newer textbooks, despite it being a wish from students, teachers and parents.

In previous years, the textbooks used in class went through a system of formal evaluation and approval. However, in June 2000, this arrangement was abandoned due to changes in the Education Act (Skrunes, 2010). The new scheme made the publishers responsible for including the various teaching and learning demands for scholarly use. This also provided teachers with more freedom and the ability to use their professional judgement based on the various learning aims from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

No text used for pedagogical purposes is neutral as they are a part of this cultural process and is a result of different discourses (Selander & Skjelbred, 2004). However, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has listed some requirements concerning what the textbook as a teaching aid is supposed to provide. This is, for example, that the textbook is supposed to mirror a diverse society where all students can feel included and appreciated (Norwegian Directorate for Education

and Training, 2020). However, even though the new curriculum provides teachers with more freedom to choose their textbooks, research shows that the textbook and its texts stays the same. Aamotsbakken (2003) calls this a "literary and scholarly canon".

Textbooks are made and written with the students' learning in mind. They are supposed to be subject-oriented and address various students differently. By this, I mean that the textbook can include texts with different levels of difficulty and a wide variety of pictures and illustrations. There are indications that teachers and students prefer a higher number of illustrations, as it appears to make the information more rememberable (Skrunes, 2010). Moreover, the way in which the textbook uses the combination of text and illustrations reveals what knowledge the authors want the students to learn. As the system of approval for scholarly textbooks was discontinued, teachers found themselves with a greater freedom of literary choice (Skrunes, 2010).

As for requirements put on textbooks based on the stipulations in the curriculum, the LK20 textbooks are supposed reflect a pluricultural society. This includes portrayals of individuals with different ways of living and different backgrounds (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). At the same time the LK20 highlights the concept of "mutual frames of references" as especially important (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In the Norwegian context this would mean that students should be taught to cherish diversity and multiple identities and perspectives, at the same time as it is important for society that the different identities and perspectives can find common ground in some overall cross-cultural values system (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

2.3.2 Research on intercultural communication in language education in textbooks

As culture and intercultural competence have been important issues in the English curricula for decades already, language education textbook research has especially focused on how such textbooks present people and culture. Many of these studies have found them to present stereotypical thinking (Lund, 2006, Danielsen, 2020). Lund (2006), for example, concluded in her study of English textbooks in Norway written for LK06 that these textbooks "provide examples of the tendency to present foreign cultures only in terms of their most exotic characteristics, and to favor texts that convey a consumer attitude to foreign countries" (p. 286). She also found evidence of stereotypical thinking, as Hispanics were presented as illegal immigrants wanting to cross the Mexican border (Lund, 2006, p. 281). However, in another study, it was found that English

textbooks had improved from their predecessor as they provided deeper cultural understanding (Danielsen, 2020, p. 60). In a study by Isaksen (2022) these findings were corroborated, showing that few stereotypes were presented in the LK20 textbooks under investigation. Isaksen also concluded that textbooks can, in fact, facilitate intercultural understanding. Intercultural competence is encouraged when the students can communicate appropriately with the texts through classroom discussions and reflections. Therefore, previous research also emphasizes the importance of choosing the textual material wisely (p.5)

2.3.3 Chapter summary

Summing up, the concept of *culture* may be broadly understood as ways of thinking and acting that are shared by members of a group of people, but not in a fixed sense, and also including identities and the possibility of creating ‘third cultures’ whenever people meet (see section 2.2.2).

Intercultural competence, on the other hand, has to do with individuals’ knowledge and skills and attitudes relating to differences in thinking and acting. In addition, it involves the ability of the individual to *decenter*, that is, being able to take the perspectives of others in order to better understand how they see the world and how they behave. In the Curriculum in English we find the terms *culture* and *intercultural competence* manifested as “ways of living”, “mindsets” and “communication patterns”. In order for textbooks to help students learn in these areas, they therefore need to present material that show a wealth of different types of living, thinking and communication styles and assist the students in knowing how to relate to them in constructive and appropriate ways.

3. Method

Before describing the method used in this thesis, I find it relevant to establish my scientific outlook. Karv (2021) describes how “the search for truth” as the foundation for all research (p. 13). This search can be executed under different circumstances, from solving a concrete issue to searching for answers to complex issues in nature and society. The theory of science may help researchers understand the relationship between different phenomena in the world, but may also be said to simplify reality (Johannessen, 2005, p. 47). As for the scientific outlook of this thesis, I take a pragmatic stance, which means that no decisive opinion is made about the real nature of existence or of knowledge, and the question of how to reach some absolute truth is abandoned. Instead, the main focus is fixed on the problem to be researched and on results that are “useful” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 65).

My research is a textbook analysis. This form of qualitative research has strong connections with historical research (Karv, 2021, p. 161). A textbook analysis is relevant as one seeks to grasp how others have interpreted material within a certain situation. The author of the textbook is a conveyer of historical messages and a portrayer of what and why something needs to be taught. However, in a constructivist epistemological perspective, which is the one taken in the current study, one can never deliver a “true” picture of reality as the author and the reader have their own cultural horizons and interpretations, according to the tenets of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics revolves around interpretation”, where the ultimate aim is to make sense or find clarity in the uncertain. In textual terms, this means that it aims to uncover underlying or deeper meaning in text (Gilje, 2019, p. 11). More specifically, as pointed out in the preceding chapter, the focus of the present analysis is on discovering to what extent the textbooks convey meanings relating to ways of living, mindsets and communication patterns.

Herder and Gadamer have contributed to my understanding of hermeneutics. They view interpretation as a central concept, focusing on the message, the messenger and the recipient. Hermeneutics can therefore be said to develop appropriate interpretations of text and other expressions of culture (Gilje, 2019, p. 34). Herder takes as a starting point the assumption that humans must base their ideas from cultural diversity (Gilje, 2019, p. 92). He stated that all expressions of culture must be interpreted in order to understand other humans and their ways of living. A problem with interpretation, however, is that larger cultural differences may create more prejudice. Because of these prejudices, one is likely to consider the values and belief systems one’s own culture as a self-evident truth and be skeptical of the belief systems of others (Gilje, 2019, p.

97). This barrier could, according to Herder, be broken by so-called ‘emphatic interpretation’. By overcoming prejudice and reducing the cultural distance one relate in more constructive ways with people from different cultures.

Gadamer introduced the term “pre-understanding” in relation to our engagement with texts. By this he wanted to underscore the point that our interpretations are influenced by prior knowledge. Ideally, the gap between interpreters’ prior understanding and knowledge and the meaning of the text should be limited. One should aim to merge these in what Gadamer called “horizon fusion” (Gilje, 2019, p. 157). He believed one would always understand another culture based on one’s own linguistic and cultural lenses (Gilje, 2019, p. 169).

These perspectives are relevant in my research as they revolve around the analysis and understanding of text, the main purpose of which is to characterize and make sense of data through finding patterns, getting an overview of the material and looking for contexts (Karv, 2021, p. 156). By choosing this method, I want to gain a deeper understanding of the before-mentioned cultural and intercultural textual phenomena in the English textbook. For my own textual analysis, I value Herder’s thoughts on cultural differences and overcoming prejudice and Gadamer’s idea of pre-understanding and how that affects cultural horizon. When students engage with the textbook, they interpret the message through their own pre-understanding. How the textbook engages with issues of intercultural learning and intercultural competence is therefore vital for its learning potential. Both the perspectives of Herder and Gadamer made me aware of my own prejudices and pre-understanding in order to learn and interpret the material. This form of study is therefore a product of social processing with multiple changes in terms of my own thought process and the future findings (Karv, 2021, p. 157). It is a flexible and dynamic process and has multiple strengths regarding the understanding of the phenomena in question.

Within qualitative methods, such as the current one, one can make use of one or multiple techniques to investigate the problem statement: Observation, document review, image interpretation, and interview (Karv, 2021, p. 158). In other words, to use a method is to follow a path to a goal (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2010). This relates to my analysis, which consists of analyzing and interpreting textual data in a back-and-forth process. The analysis is the foundation for further understanding the topic based on the reduction of data into categories in. There are different types of categorizing data, but the different approaches usually have in common the intention to discover meaning in the text and analyze what the text is communicating.

More specifically, I will use open categorization for my analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). An open categorization can be executed by analyzing words, sentences or pages. In the present exploration I chose to let the page be the unit of analysis, examining the textbook pages in terms of content connected to culture and intercultural competence. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that, as the material in this kind of research is found in textual format, it is relevant to use *thematic analysis*, as it is "an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data" (p. 77). More specifically, a thematic analysis can be characterized as "a systematic process of coding, examining of meaning and provision of a description of the social reality through the creation of theme (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016, p. 100).

To specify, in order to analyze the text, I will look for possible cultural and intercultural competence learning aspects and how the text describes this. This, then, focuses on "ways of living", "mindsets", "communication patterns" and the ability to decenter. While reading the textbook page by page, I inserted post-it notes where the textbook provided evidence for the terms described and where it lacked. One example of this was in chapter 1 in the textbook *English 5* where the textbook described similarities between London, the capital of the United Kingdom, and the city Stavanger in Norway. This was under the theme "Ways of living" as it provides facts about another country. This step in the analysis organized for the later steps and processes. It can also be understood as "a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to the most basic element of the raw data that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The next step in the analysis involved the restriction of post-it notes to the places in the text that were relevant for my analysis. Fewer, more meaningful notes were made and replaced the first ones. This followed the terms valuable for the research as overarching themes (Boeije, 2010).

For my analysis I found it relevant to look at two textbooks, as I could compare and look at what a fifth grader get to see in their English tuition in terms of culture and intercultural competence learning. The first textbook analyzed is *English 5*, published by Cappelen Damm. *English 5* was published in 2020 and is meant to cater for the requirements of LK20. The publisher states that this textbook has a "variety of authentic texts" and the overall agenda of the book is "chosen to cater the cross-curricular themes for English and the new competence aims". The textbook is divided into 4 chapters. These are "Good talking to you", "Take an interest", "Travel through old and new" and "Respect our earth". The chapter "Travel through old and new" is the only chapter relating to culture and language learning, according to the description (Solberg & Unnerud, 2020). The second

textbook analyzed is *Explore 5*, published by Gyldendal. Like *English 5*, *Explore 5* is also made to cater for the requirements of LK20. It was published in 2020 and is the second edition of the textbook. *Explore 5* claims to turn students into “language scientists” by “hunting for linguistic relations between English and other languages (Edwards, Omland, Royer & Solli, 2020). I chose these two textbooks as both Gyldendal and Cappelen Damm are known publishers of teaching material used in school and can represent what an average student in 5th grade read in their textbooks in class.

3.1 Research credibility

When conducting research, it is important that the results that are presented are credible, dependable and confirmable (Cohen et al., 2011) In this section I discuss the trustworthiness of my research design and how I have tried to deal with threats to the validity and reliability of my findings (Maxwell, 2013).

3.1.1 Validity

Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) refer to how social sciences is concerned with the suitability of the chosen method. Validity is therefore something that the researcher should keep in mind through the entire analysis. For my analysis I have gathered theory from different sources within the same overall theme, which is intercultural competence. I found data from the English curricula, LK20, as well from research, such as Byram (1997),. I gather data from different sources, which is also called triangulation (Creswell, 2014). This means that the data comes from different sources, making an overall theme of the study.

Creswell (2014) discusses how qualitative data needs to be well processed to make sure important elements are not neglected and overlooked. The validity of the study needs to cover all important issues. My choice of method is revolving around interpretation, and I have therefore been concerned to look at all elements of the study as equally important. However, as my role in the collection and analysis of the data was very prominent, I will of course, to some degree, have influenced the phenomenon I am studying. Therefore, it is important to be transparent about the whole procedure, self-critical in the steps that have been made, and always open to alternative interpretations (Maxwell, 2013).

This is something that Patton (2015) also mentions in his checklist for quality in qualitative research. He mentioned 10 general criteria for assessing validity. Four of these points relate to data collection procedures, which need to be systematic and carefully documented. Then he mentions data analysis, which should be appropriate for the kind of data collected. Moreover, we find strengths and weaknesses of the research design, and the importance of acknowledging and discussing these. Finally, we find the findings of the analysis and how these should flow from the data and analysis. As for the first point here, systematicity and documentation, the choice of textbooks was quite straightforward as there are few such books in the Norwegian setting. However, I have strived to be methodical in my documentation of how the data was gathered, as shown above. When it comes to the second point, making the data analysis appropriate for the collected data, it is obviously quite natural to use document analysis when examining textbooks used in school. Regarding the third point, the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and the methods used, one strength is that I have been meticulous in analyzing the data, as well as attempting to be aware of my own role in this analysis. This is a strength of the investigation, as the method chosen are highly relevant for the nature of the study itself. A weakness, however, is that the voices of the students and teachers who uses these textbooks in practice have not been accounted for. However, I have argued that my chosen method and investigation through the use of introspective research, as systematic data collection, has provided sound evidence for the study. As for the final point, my findings are based on what data I found from analyzing the textbooks systematically. The procedure was the same for both textbooks and the process followed a logical flow from each analysis based on the same theory.

In the analysis proper I used, as I pointed out earlier, a hermeneutic approach. As hermeneutics revolves around interpretation and how the researcher's own perspective may influence the interpretations made it has been important for me to consider how my "pre-understanding" could have impacted the inferences drawn.

3.1.2 Reliability

Reliability in research concerns whether or not the findings are consistent (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). This means that the research process can be repeated and provide the same findings. As stated in the section above, I am analyzing the textbooks from my own preunderstanding of the overarching theme of the study. This means that my findings are somewhat colored by my prior knowledge and understandings. It can therefore not be guaranteed that other researcher within the

same topic would have concluded the same or made the same findings as I have. However, a transparent research process can ensure that others can reflect on my choices and how the analysis has been executed (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018). This includes registering my study, sharing my collected data and findings. Within qualitative research, reliability revolves around the relationship between the study and the researcher. I am therefore open about my analyzing process to strengthen the reliability of my study. Transparency requires openness and accountability as it is an ethical approach to research. This sharing of the research process allows for others to undertake the same research or expand the research further (Cohen et al, 2018).

3.1.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations concern the extent to which the research is abiding by the standards of the code of ethics. As a researcher, ethical considerations need to be considered when conducting research. The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) has provided guidelines for how to consciously conduct research on terms of ethical principles. These include a set of basic norms developed over time and is vital for the international research community (NESH, 2021). Choice of method, how to handle collected data, an open research process and transparency is all a part of the ethics within research. NESH (2021) also states how a well-functioning, knowledge-based and democratic society relies on trustworthy knowledge from research. In this research, I found it important to address how I collected and stored data. I stored my findings and in a safe place, more precisely, in my computer. My post-it notes remained in the textbooks while I was analyzing and later kept sorted in my own apartment for the following analyzing process. I was the only one with access to it and therefore ensured credibility and validity of the study.

4 Findings and discussion

In this chapter I present the results of the analyzes of the English textbooks chosen with a view to answering the research question

To what extent and how are culture and intercultural competence treated in two English textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway?

More specifically, I looked for the intercultural aspects “ways of living”, “mindsets”, “communication patterns” and decentering, examining the textbooks *English 5* and *Explore 5*.

4.1 *English 5* by Cappelen Damm

In the following, I will present and discuss the findings from *English 5*. As the results will show, there are definitely elements in this textbook catering for the development of intercultural competence, particularly regarding *ways of living*. However, there seems to be potential for further including aspects relating to *mindsets*, *communication patterns* and *the ability to decenter*.

4.1.1 Ways of living

Through each chapter *English 5* provides a lot of factual information regarding cultural and intercultural aspects of English language learning. It relates to, for example, how someone spends their holidays or how they eat dinner. As mentioned in Chapter 2, knowing important information about the world and culture is an important part of being interculturally competent. In terms of providing facts about different “ways of living”, the textbook does this, for example on page 15 in chapter 1, where similarities between London, the capital of the United Kingdom, and the city Stavanger in Norway are being described. This fits with the comparative approach to intercultural learning suggested by Byram (1997), stressing the importance of comparing and contrasting one’s own culture with the culture being studied. In this specific case, developing students’ factual knowledge about London allows them to gain an understanding of the demography of the city in terms of how many people live there, what the landmarks are and how the city itself is structured, at the same time as it provides a point of departure for comparison with another city.

Chapter 2 of the textbook is called "Take an interest" and is visualized by various people doing sports and playing in the park. The chapter focuses on demonstrating how different people live their lives and use their spare time. On page 57, under the heading "talk and tell", the students are asked to explain what kind of pets they prefer and why. Preference for pets in itself is not a part of intercultural competence as you find pets in all cultures, but the interesting part is the discussion of "why" someone would prefer an animal over another. This opens up for possibilities for the students to discuss different interests, such as pets, and discover if this is a part of their culture. However, the textbook itself does not ask the students to reflect specifically on this, and the teacher is therefore left to initiate such discussions in order for intercultural learning to happen regarding this issue.

Chapter 3 is called "travel through old and new" and presents a map consisting of different cultural and historical elements, such as different sorts of food, flags, monuments, buildings and people. On page 91 a "talk and tell" invites students to share facts and information about London or another city of their choice. It also encourages them to share what they think would be interesting to see and do in a big city. Chapter 3 invites the students to learn more about London, including important landmarks such as The Tower of London and Buckingham Palace, as well as traditional food such as tea and scones, fish and chips and football as an important part of English culture. On page 108, there is a segment called "The tower of Londonium" and it presents important historical events which led to London becoming what it is today. This includes the Celtic people, Romans and the Latin language. Page 114 presents a timeline presenting London from 40 000 years ago up to 1863, introducing "The ice age", "the Vikings attack on London" and "the great fire of London". A talk and tell on the next page follows up on these events and asks the students to "choose one of the time eras, and find out more from the period". Chapter 3 also elaborates on food and has a segment called "hungry and thirsty", which presents traditional English food such as egg and bacon, tea and toast. A talk and tell asks the students to discuss why people eat different dishes in different countries and what kind of food they prefer. Page 134 presents the history of tea and asks the students what meals are typical in their culture. Overall, these findings indicate that it is mainly the factual component of intercultural competence, i.e. ways of living, that can be developed from these texts, supplied by reflecting over similarities and differences relating to cities and personal preferences and habits to some degree.

4.1.2 Mindsets

Through the part “talk and tell” different questions are provided for further engaging the students in the chapter texts. The questions, such as “how would you ask for the bill at a restaurant? ”, invite the students to reflect on appropriate language use, how one would ask to borrow something politely and how certain situations, such as dress codes in school, makes them feel. These questions elaborate on the information in the text and are meant to create a deeper understanding of the learning material by making the students become more aware of what they have read, creating a deeper connection with the learning material. This is highly important in cultural learning, relating to Hannerz’ (1992) notion of the three dimensions of culture, which imply a process that is both in the student’s mind and spread through social relationships (p. 7).

The question “who can you speak English to?” on page 22 is an example of how the textbook encourages the students to discuss language with each other and reflect on how language is perceived by different individuals. This question is supposed to initiate reflection processes and is verbalized through discussion. However, the question could be elaborated further for even deeper intercultural reflection concerning the relationship between language and culture. It leaves it up to the teacher to create questions that can make the students dive deeper into differences in languages and thinking.

On page 24 students are encouraged to describe someone in the class without using their name as well as describing themselves. This could be an opportunity to discuss how the students view others and themselves. The interesting part would be to see how they would portray someone, either stereotypically or more in-depth, including how someone else acts and thinks. However, the textbook does not encourage the students to decenter or to compare identities in terms of mindsets, behavior or communication patterns (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 167). Therefore, the teacher is again responsible for taking the topic further for intercultural competence development.

4.1.3 Communication patterns

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) states how good teaching aids should prompt students to look for similarities and differences between words, expressions and linguistic phenomena in different languages. The idiom “break a leg” is a cultural dependent saying and is demonstrated on page 21 under “Junior journalists” how different styles of communication can lead

to misunderstandings. The reporter Chris states "Well done! Hope you'll win the match. Break a leg!" were the interviewed one, Sarah, replies "Thank you, hope I won't break a leg though.". This idiom is a form of indirect communication, which means that the sender of the message, Chris, wishes the receiver of the message, Sarah, good luck. However, Sarah does not understand the implied meaning and one can argue that she responds to a more formal and direct communication style. Still, the importance lies in mastering words and expressions which suit the recipient and the context rather than using correct grammar in all situations. Rindal & Brevik (2019) support this by claiming that "appropriateness is more important than correctness" (p. 50). This may be particularly relevant regarding oral communication, which may generally be more informal and context-dependent than writing. A good textbook should therefore acknowledge this, not neglecting the oral uses of the language and including diversity of English linguistic varieties (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, studies show that communication patterns are not necessarily the same within a culture but varies based on individual differences (Risager, 2007).

English 5 demonstrates differences between formal and informal language throughout the textbook through wordlists at the bottom of the pages, including examples of differences in sociocultural expressions. Different English words are listed beside English synonyms or explanations for each word, as well as the Norwegian translation. For example, on page 9 the word "Lucky" is listed as "Lucky – Good things happen to you – Heldig" and the greeting "How are you?" are listed as "How are you? – Polite greeting – hvordan går det?". The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) states the importance of understanding linguistic context, and an aim is for students to have a repertoire in English words and expressions which enable them to communicate spontaneously both in formal and informal situations. These above-mentioned wordlists can function as a way for the students to understand the words and phrases in more depth, which again enables them to apply them more appropriately in different situations. This is an important aspect of Dypedahl's (2018) intercultural competence model, which states that communicative competence is a vital part of intercultural competence.

4.1.4 Decentering

On page 31 in *English 5* students are encouraged to explain why a boy who was dropped from his football team is feeling depressed. In order to be able to understand how someone else is feeling, the students need to put themselves in their position. They need to see and to interpret the situation from

an outside perspective. This is what is referred to as decentering (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 167) and is vital for the students to understand cultural and personal differences. Under the “talk and tell” heading the students are also asked to pretend to be the boy’s friend and provide the boy with advice on how to deal with the situation. It also wants the students to place themselves in his mother’s position and verbalize what kind of advice she might give. This story and the following questions ask the students to decenter into three different positions in order to reflect on the situation from multiple angles. They are asked to see it from the boy’s perspective through his emotion of depression and anger, the mother’s perspective through her worried eyes as well as how they would feel as his friend. The issue of decentering is linked to metacognition, because of the ability to see the situation from an outside perspective (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2018, p. 169).

To be able to develop a metacognitive perspective and the ability to decenter, the students should be given a variety of situations to train this skill. Interestingly, the textbook does not offer many of these situations, which provide the students with an outsider’s view. One example, however, is the task on page 107, which not only includes a “here and now” perspective, but also encourages a reflection through different ages and chapters of history. I interpret this as an instance of decentering development, as the ability to decenter not only concerns the issue of “putting oneself in someone else’s shoes”, but also as a way of looking at the past in order to understand the future, of what has been and what could happen (Kramsch, 2006). So, on page 107, under “Talk and tell”, the students are asked to discuss “what can we learn from people lived before us?” and “how can we learn about the life of people who lived in the past?”. These questions provide the students with the opportunity to look into someone else’s life from an outside perspective, which challenges their worldviews and builds empathy for life lived in a different time. This transcends into looking at differences as something one can learn from rather than something one should avoid.

4.1.5 Summary of findings from *English 5*

My main findings from this textbook is that the focus mainly lies on the aspect of “ways of living” and that the other aspects are less prominent. I assume the reasoning for this is that the textbook has chosen to focus on providing the students with factual knowledge on daily life, demography, history etc., rather than making them reflect in-depth on causal relationships or comparative issues. On the one hand, factual knowledge regarding other places in the world is an important part of intercultural competence, but on the another, according to the models of intercultural competence presented in

Chapter 2, a deeper understanding is necessary, and one also needs to know something about the way in which people think, as well as the way they communicate. Moreover, one may speculate that it is easier for the textbook to provide surface level knowledge about places of interest rather than in-depth know-how about world views, values, norms and verbal and non-verbal interacting. Another assumption I take from my findings is that it is not entirely clear what mindsets and communication patterns refer to. Apart from Dypedahl (2019) and Dypedahl and Bøhn (2017), which give specific explanations for what “mindsets and communication styles” can refer to (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2017, p. 6), none of the sources I have used for this thesis neither use such terms, nor explain what they may mean. Also, the fact that the Curriculum in English does not specify what mindsets and communication styles are, makes it difficult for both textbook authors and teachers to know how to put them to use.

4.2 *Explore 5* by Gyldendal

In the following, I will present and discuss the findings from *Explore 5*. As the results will show, there are elements in this textbook catering for the development of intercultural competence, but for the most part the intercultural issues are restricted to comparing and contrasting factual matters focusing on daily life in English-speaking countries, rather than in-depth reflections around how people live, think and communicate in different cultures. The potential is there, but it is largely dependent on the teacher creatively exploring these issues further.

4.2.1 Ways of living

In chapter 1, page 13, the topic “Me and my school” is introduced. This first chapter “My school” presents four students from the US, South Africa, England and New Zealand. They all wear school uniforms and they explain to the reader how a day in their life could look like, including classes, time schedules, their uniforms and how they spend their lunchbreak. The textbook addresses this through follow-up questions in a section called “Let’s talk!”, with reflective questions such as “do you think school uniforms are a good idea?” and “why do you think it is a good idea? Why do you think it is not a good idea?”. This is interesting as it provides the students with an insider view of other cultures and enables them to compare someone else’s way of spending their school time with their own. As pointed out above, the practice of comparing and relating is emphasized by Byram (1997) as important aspects of intercultural learning. Besides the knowledge provided through the stories from the students in the textbook, the students get to reflect on what they have read about. This process of reflection is a way to enlighten them about how different ways of living and other

cultural elements important for cultural understanding, as well as a condition for developing an open mindset. As mentioned in Chapter 2, becoming aware of one's own attitudes is important in terms of developing one's intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). This is also linked to the ability to decenter. As Kramch (2006) points out, decentering is intrinsically about acquiring an understanding of the life world of others by taking their perspective through differences in ways of living.

Aspects relating to ways of living is also found elsewhere in the textbook, such as on page 111, where the textbook introduces typical Norwegian schooldays with emphasis on the students' after-school activities. The figurative mascot of the book, Mr. Xplore, asks the students to do a class survey in order to learn how their classmates spend their spare time. This is a way to bring the topic even closer, as it demonstrates how someone within the same school and therefore within a similar cultural frame spend their time in different ways. Culture across borders and culture close to home could both have many similarities and differences, and being aware of these differences is a way to further understand how individuals are different despite being in similar cultural contexts (Risager, 2007). This topic is also found on page 131, under "being online", where Mr. Xplore wants the students to share their habits on the internet.

In sum, *Explore 5* provides different cultural facts throughout the textbook. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Byram (1997) emphasizes how cultural facts are important when developing intercultural competence. More specifically, factual knowledge of other cultures may lead to cultural understanding and decrease the gap between "us and them". *Explore 5* does this by providing these facts, which could explain why and how someone would engage in different ways of living and create a deeper understanding of differences. This includes cultural occasions and how these are celebrated differently, or it could why someone would wear a certain dress on a particular date. Page 48 presents different Halloween facts, as well as how this celebration is carried out throughout the world. Consequently, the students will get to know about differences and similarities, and they can compare their own Halloween experiences with those of others.

As for "ways of living" *Explore 5* has the potential to develop intercultural competence regarding cultural knowledge. However, it appears that the examples provided should be further utilized by integrating them even further with tasks designed to make the students reflect on the similarities and differences of the cases in question, seen in relation to their own culture. Byram (1997) highlights

the importance of comparing and contrasting as methods to develop intercultural competence, and the students could benefit from being told how to decenter and reflect through guidance.

4.2.2 Mindsets

Getting to know other individuals is an important part of developing intercultural competence, and Byram (1997) includes this as "openness" and be willing to have the appropriate mindset. Page 73 introduces a story about getting to know each other and Mr. Xplore asks the students to discuss how one can get to know each other and make a role play for making new friends I interpret this is an exercise of how the students can develop a curious and exploring mindset towards others in order to have successful communication. When making friends, one must be able to have the appropriate mindset first and foremost. The ability to be open to differences and to meet others in a friendly manner requires an unbiased mindset, and this a skill that should be trained. Dypedahl and Bøhn (2020) explain that a higher degree of cultural awareness makes "it easier to monitor and regulate one's own communication and behavior" (p. 88). This can therefore be linked to a metacognitive exercise, highly valuable in developing intercultural (Dypedahl, 2018), as it trains the students' ability to ask themselves questions regarding how their responses and answers can affect the outcome based on who they are communicating with.

While it is important to being open to students and making friends with individuals their own age, I believe having an open mindset towards all generations is a way of looking at history and cultural similarities and differences. On page 96 Mr. Xplore wants the students to search the internet and learn a clapping game which involves singing. This leads to the next task, where they are asked to investigate which clapping games their parents or grandparents used to do. I interpret songs and games as social and cultural ideas, which can tell a story of a different time in terms of history. By engaging the students in the investigation of how someone would perform the same task, in this case the clapping game, they may also experience another part of cultural history. This can lead to a shift in mindset as socialization plays a crucial part (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 82). It can function as a bridge towards generations.

4.2.3 Communication patterns

Language awareness does not only refer to the mindset aspect, but also the linguistic part where students should be able to analyze grammatical form and use language appropriately as it can change language meaning and function (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 88). How one chooses to

communicate can shape the outcome of the conversation and, on page 3 the students are introduced to how English is spoken all over the world by different people. This is followed up by the importance of questions and how asking different questions can lead to a more open conversation and ease attempts to getting to know someone else. The students are then asked to ask each other questions, such as "where are you from? ". This is a basic, but a dynamic look at communication styles as it trains the students ability to adapt their communication for different purposes. When making friend and getting to know someone else, they must be able to speak to different people with different communication patterns even though the purpose, in this case making new friends, is the same. This is aligned with the study conducted by Risager (2007) which is described in the theory chapter.

The textbook accounts for this ability to a certain degree on page 46, where the students are asked to read a poem with different voices, such as sad, happy, angry and scared. This demonstrates how a poem, and its meaning, can be received and portrayed totally differently depending on the applied tone of the reader. However, *Explore 5* does not discuss how someone is more direct or indirect in their approach. I believe this would be a good opportunity to discuss formality in conversation by addressing how emotions can affect the course of the interaction. On the other hand, *Explore 5* does address formal and informal communication patterns a bit further on in the textbook. On page 93, Mr. Xplore encourages the students to perform a roleplay where they play out a shopping trip, and their task is to use the words "please" and "thank you". This is vital for intercultural competence as it relates to appropriate language skills and how cultures can use these polite phrases differently. This element is followed up on page 131, where the focus is how one may communicate with people from different countries online trough video games or social media. Mr. Xplore also wants the students to write a text message about something they have engaged with on holiday and presents different ways of producing such a message. A point is made of the importance to understand how language use can affect the conversation and that different communication situations, either online, trough text message or in a store can affect the outcome. However, I think this issue is not sufficiently utilized and should be treated much more thoroughly in the textbook.

4.2.4 Decentering

In *Explore 5*, one example of decentering, or the ability to change perspectives and see a situation from someone else's point of view, is found on page 100, where a story about "Horrid Henry" is introduced. He is a spoiled boy and only likes expensive items. The story goes on about materialism

and how Henry is not very happy despite having a lot of material belongings. This is an insider view on someone else's mind, were the students get to see multiple sides to an individual as well as how something may not always be the way it first appears. The students are actively asked to try to take his perspective, which is what causes decentering.

The textbook makes a point out of these different points of view, and page 113 wants the students to investigate how different people are being polite in different ways and why someone else might interpret situations differently. This is important as it makes the students reflect on differences and position themselves on the outside looking inwards. Mr. Xplore also asks why this is important knowledge for themselves, something that may cause the students to dig deeper into conversations and reflections around cultural points of view and differences regarding someone else's cultural horizon.

One aspect of decentering is to envision someone else's point of view. A more advanced step is to try to actively participate in conversations regarding it. Mr. Xplore introduces the students to four different individuals from different parts of the world and the concept of "pocket money". Some of these individuals receive pocket money without having to work for it, some must do chores and others do not get pocket money. The following pages introduces a boy named Stud with "loads and loads of money" and how it does not make him happy as he is all alone in the world. The students are then asked to reflect and share their ideas together towards both the topic of pocket money and why Stud is not happy and what they would advise him to do in order to become more satisfied with his life. This encourages a metacognitive perspective on different lifestyles and the students get to position themselves within the situation of someone different (Sercu, 2004).

4.2.5 Main findings of the analyses

Like *English 5*, *Explore 5* is a textbook which generally treats cultural and intercultural aspects on the surface level. It provides the students with factual knowledge, which is important, but does not utilize the potential these facts and situations could provide for further developing intercultural competence. Again, I do not have any data to explain why this is so, but one may speculate that it could be due space constraints, or the view that complex texts and tasks relating to world views, value systems, direct and indirect communication, and other aspects relating to "mindsets" and "communication patterns" (Bøhn & Dypedahl, 2017) are deemed to advanced for lower secondary school students. Another possible explanation, as mentioned above, is that authors lack of

knowledge of what “mindsets” and “communication patterns” actually refers to. Nonetheless, it leaves more of the responsibility for developing students knowledge and skills in this area to the teacher and the students using the textbook.

5. Conclusion

This investigation set out to answer the following research question:

“To what extent and how are culture and intercultural competence treated in two English textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway?”.

When gathering theory relevant for my research I found four important terms connected to culture and intercultural competence. These terms were highlighted through the English curricula, LK20, namely *mindsets, communication patterns and ways of living*. In addition, I also included *decentering*, as this component is highly valuable for developing intercultural competence (Dypedahl, 2018). These were therefore my main focus areas when looking for how intercultural competence is treated in these textbooks. More specifically, and based on the intercultural competence models provided by Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018), I found the component “Attitudes” as the first step and foundation for having and developing intercultural competence. Attitudes describe how the students need an open and curious mind (Byram, 1997) towards others when dealing with the four important terms *mindset, styles of communication, ways of living and the ability to decenter*. Deardorff (2006), in fact, makes *attitudes* the foundation of her intercultural competence models, expressed by respect, openness and curiosity. All the models also include *knowledge* and *skills* as essential factors for becoming interculturally competent, and all these aspects, then, have served as a basis in my analysis.

As for the results of the current investigation, my analyses showed that, when it comes to ‘ways of living’, this is the component the textbooks focus mostly on when it comes to intercultural competence development. More specifically, it seems that the themes of the textbooks facilitate for learning in the areas of lifestyle choices, hobbies, schooldays and leisure time. They also provide the students with tasks regarding these matters, presenting questions on their own way of living compared with that of others. As for ‘mindsets’, the results revealed that neither textbook provide very advanced intercultural competence development in this area. It is much left to the teacher to ask the students reflective questions and create discussions regarding the students’ own thinking patterns, as well as differences regarding how people regard the world around them. Neither do the books cater much for metacognitive perspectives on individuality, which can be important for intercultural competence development (Sercu, 2004). When it comes to ‘communication patterns’ I also discovered that this component is very much left to the teacher. Both textbooks have potential for

rich learning outcomes in this area, but do not utilize this enough. They focus on the grammar aspect of language learning, but do not cater for how someone could, for example, have an indirect or direct way of communicating. Finally, as for ‘decentering’, it was discovered that the textbooks do have potential for reflective topics and themes, but it is again highly dependent on how it is applied by the teacher. The metacognitive perspective which can cause reflection is therefore uncertain.

In both books, the students are asked to share what they think about different cultural elements, from food to historical incidents in history. However, the chapters in both books mainly present surface knowledge concerning certain countries and holidays, with a focus on grammar and spelling. Therefore one may conclude that the intercultural component *knowledge* is addressed, but only to a certain degree. Culture and intercultural competence are processed mainly through “talk and tell” (*English 5*) and by Mr. Xplore (*Explore 5*). Both these ‘comment boxes’ provide the students with different questions, attempting to make them, at least to some extent, reflect and become more aware of their attitudes towards the different topics. Byram (1997) ties this to “the ability to decenter” as this may guide the students to change perspectives and compare culture to value cultural diversity. This is also supported in the curriculum, LK20, which states how the students are supposed to “interpret and compare” and “reflect and evaluate” texts to become independent and develop a metacognitive perspective (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2021). Relatedly, the textbooks may be said to make some use of the intercultural competence component *Skills of interpreting and relating* (Byram, 1997) by asking these questions, but they are not utilized enough, and it is left to the teacher to dig deeper.

The “talk and tell” and “Mr. Xplore” boxes are the dominant voices in the textbooks in terms of intercultural competence development. As described in theory section, these boxes home in on what kind of aspects of cultural and intercultural knowledge that should be highlighted. It is worth noting in this discussion that it is not the terms *mindset*, *styles of communication*, *ways of living* and the ability to *decenter* in themselves which are important for competence development, but rather *how* they are dealt with. For example, the books provide facts about common food in the UK, i.e. simple factual knowledge, but they also demonstrate how the students could order food at a restaurant using polite phrases, i.e. procedural knowledge relating to socio-cultural rules (Council of Europe, 2001). This corresponds with the example of making friends under “mindset”. This topic does not only require the appropriate mindset towards making friends but also includes how one should communicate this. This communication part is practiced through roleplay, where students get to

experience what such a situation could look and feel like. Moreover, the students may get an opportunity to decenter, putting themselves in their communication partner's shoes, which again could again affect their "attitudes" and provide insight into how others feel and think. However, in order for this example to work well, the teacher would probably have to scaffold the students' actual roleplaying, as the task itself does not specify in any great deal how the decentering should proceed.

This study has its limitations. Culture and intercultural competence are important but also very complex terms. The way I have analyzed them here are largely built in Street (1993), Byram (1997), Dearsdorff (2006) and Dypedahl (2018). This theoretical framework will therefore probably have influenced the way I have analyzed the term, disregarding other theories which may have been relevant. Moreover, the study only focuses on two textbooks, which of course makes it difficult to generalize the results to other textbooks at the lower secondary level in Norway, not to mention textbooks on other levels or in other countries. Also, the findings are colored by my own biases, although I have tried to be open and transparent about them here and to analyze the material as consciously and objectively as I could.

For future exploration of how textbooks deal with culture and intercultural competence, I would suggest including methods of observation and qualitative interview because it is very relevant to see how the books are actually used by teachers and students. One thing may be the potential learning material has for developing intercultural competence, but this will of course depend on how the material is actually put to work by its readers and users. It would be interesting to observe how these textbooks are used in class and how the teachers interpret them in their teaching, as well as the teachers' thoughts regarding using textbooks for intercultural competence development. As explained, teachers are highly dependent on the textbook, and therefore the topic should be given more time and attention than what I was able to in this study.

When it comes to implications of this research for ELT in Norway, it should be pointed out that, as I did not find much explicit content in the two textbooks relevant to developing intercultural competence, the teacher has a very responsible role for such competence. When using these textbooks, teachers must engage the students in the content through further reflections and discussions, which can contribute to their intercultural learning beyond what the textbooks provide. In other words, textbooks in the subject English have a lot of room for improvement. As the results show, there are some good suggestions for how ways of living could be worked with. However, as

for “ways of living”, “mindsets”, and decentering, there is very little that the books provide. By including more content in this area, students will have a better way of improving their intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes in the way that LK20 stipulates.

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