

# *MASTEROPPGAVE*

Intercultural learning: Exploring the intercultural potential of *Crash* in the EFL classroom.

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the film *Crash* can be used to promote intercultural learning in the English classroom at upper secondary level. It is important to raise learners' awareness regarding their own assumptions and attitudes towards people belonging to other cultures, especially during times certain countries in Europe are experiencing a populist uprising. Through a qualitative case study of 16 learners at a vocational upper secondary school in Norway, this research study presents and discusses various classroom activities when examining how intercultural learning can be promoted through films. Employing films in educational settings allows learners to experience a world beyond the classroom setting and it is also supported by competence aims in the National English Subject Curriculum. The data material analysed and discussed in this research study consists of responses from six class activities in total. The class activities consist of a pre-watching worksheet with focus on the concepts stereotypes and prejudice, three viewing guides related to specific segments of the film *Crash*, one task where the learners write a reflective text where they answer specific questions and a final activity where the participants write an autobiographical text from one of the character's perspectives. All responses are discussed in light of theories on intercultural learning and the Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence by Michael Byram (1997). My research study shows that the film *Crash* illustrates several interesting and thought-provoking intercultural issues and the teaching outline works as an effective didactic approach when facilitating intercultural learning in the English classroom.

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background for the thesis

Today's society is characterised by diversity and mobility and people from all corners of the world come in contact with each other whether it is through social media, business or travelling. The ability properly communicate with people from other countries and cultures, to understand the different world views people have and to become aware of one's own place in this multicultural world has become immensely important. David Crystal (2001) writes that English is considered the world's lingua franca and there has never been a time when so many people from different countries speak one common language (p. 4). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, the goal has always been to equip learners with the proper tools to communicate in English. However, in recent times there has also been an increased focus on the cultural aspect of language teaching and learning.

Claire Kramsch (1998), a well-known researcher in applied linguistics and language pedagogy, explains that there is an inseparable bond between language and culture. Words that are used in communication "express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share (p. 3). Additionally, she underscores that words are reflections of attitudes, beliefs and world views (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3). In any communicative setting, particularly in intercultural encounters, attitudes and beliefs can be revealed through stereotypes and prejudice. Negative stereotyping and prejudicial assumptions about other groups or individuals are detrimental in intercultural encounters and learners should be made aware of the dangers of categorising people based on ethnocentric perspectives. At the very worst, such attitudes lead to racism and discrimination. I do believe that educators in general have an important task when educating the youth. Not only should teachers *teach* in a didactically and pedagogically justifiable manner; their teaching should also prepare learners for life outside of the constricted walls of their classrooms. EFL teachers, in particular, should equip learners with the proper tools to co-exist with others in a diverse society, promote critical awareness of both their own culture and other cultures as well as appreciate multiculturalism as it manifests itself in the world today. This is truly important in this day and age, especially in the aftermath of the turbulent events in Europe where several countries experience a populist uprising as a result of the refugee crisis (Troianovski, 2016).

The focus on intercultural learning in the EFL classroom is articulated in The Norwegian National Subject Curriculum as well. It stresses that while the linguistic aspect of

EFL is very important, teachers must also integrate the cultural aspect, such as cultural norms and conventions, in the classroom (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training , 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, the curriculum also underscores that the “[d]evelopment of communicative language skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and cultural competence promote the general education perspective and strengthen democratic involvement and co-citizenship” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013, p. 1). In the simplest terms, the curriculum addresses the importance of acquiring skills to successfully communicate with people and appreciate groups and individuals who have differing cultural values, ideas and norms than oneself, which is known as intercultural competence.

The ideas promoted in the Norwegian National Subject Curriculum in English are not new, nor are they revolutionary. They are influenced by lengthy international research on the importance of integrating intercultural learning and assessing intercultural competence in the EFL classroom, conducted by the European Council. In 2001, *The Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages* (CEFR) was presented, which proved to be an enormous asset for institutions all across Europe when designing curricula for foreign languages. The CEFR particularly emphasises that both linguistic and cultural competences are immensely important and that both these aspects are dependent on the level of knowledge learners acquire about other groups and individuals. This knowledge enables “the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences” (The Council of Europe, 2001, p. 43).

Since it is pivotal that EFL learners are subjected to different cultures from English-speaking countries in order to develop their intercultural competence, teachers have to explore different methods and materials when presenting this topic in their classrooms. One way of doing this is through films where they serve as illustrations to cultural traits, values and attitudes outside of learners’ own society. However, classroom activities must be carefully designed and need to be adapted to the specific learner group they are intended for. As an in-service teacher, I find it important to present learners with material that not only relates to EFL, but that also has some utility value beyond our English classroom. With this in mind, I have designed an intercultural film project for a vocational upper secondary class in Norway with the intention of promoting intercultural learning.

## 1.2 Research question

Since there is an increased focus on developing learners' intercultural competence and promoting intercultural learning in the EFL classroom, I wanted to investigate whether I could successfully integrate intercultural learning in one of my classrooms. This thesis is inspired by my pilot study from the course Project and Method where I examined intercultural learning through film in an immigrant adult class. This time, I wanted to examine whether the same results could be attained with a much younger group of learners with considerable less life experience and a very different perspective of the world as well as include other types of activities in the teaching plan. This thesis will focus on how a specific film can be used to raise cultural awareness in the EFL classroom and allows them to evaluate how negative stereotypes and prejudice can hinder successful communication in intercultural settings. With this in mind, the thesis question is as follows: how can the film *Crash* be used to facilitate intercultural learning in EFL at upper secondary level?

Through a variety of activities, my objective has been to use the film *Crash* as a sane point of departure when discussing the dangers of stereotyping, the effects of prejudice and the importance of accepting and respecting the different world views, values and traits we find in different cultures. All these different activities are presented in chapter 3. In addition to this, I hoped that the learners would gain more knowledge about their own culture by contrasting and comparing it to what they saw in the film. When analysing whether the activities proved to be successful, Michael Byram's (1997) Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence (ICCM) has been an immensely helpful and important tool. Naturally, *Crash* cannot be treated as an authentic portrayal of the American society, which I also elaborate on in sub-chapter 2.4, but it can most definitely illustrate issues that arise in a multicultural society in general, not just in the USA. Nonetheless, my assumption is that the film presents some interesting aspects that most definitely can be used to promote intercultural learning in the EFL classroom.

## 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured in six main chapters. In the first chapter called *introduction*, I have already presented the importance of conducting a research study connected to intercultural learning as well my rationale for the thesis question designed for this particular thesis.

Chapter two, *theoretical framework*, presents relevant theory connected to intercultural learning in the EFL classroom. A definition of culture will be presented,



followed by the clarification of the terms *intercultural communication and learning*. Consequently, the intercultural aspect in the National English Subject Curriculum for vocational learners at upper secondary level will be given an account for. Finally, I will present my rationale for employing films with the purpose of facilitating intercultural learning.

*The didactic framework* is the third chapter and here I present the selected film used in the research project. Additionally, an analysis of the intercultural aspects of this film is also given. In this chapter, I also explain the teaching outline for the intercultural film project in detail.

The fourth chapter, *methodology*, gives account for the methodology that was used when collecting the data. Information about the participants as well as how consent was obtained from them is also explained here.

In chapter five, *findings and discussion*, the data collected from the intercultural film project is presented and the discussion of the findings follows immediately.

The sixth chapter, *conclusion*, sums up the findings by answering the research question.

## **2.0 Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Definition of culture**

A short introduction to the intricate concept called *culture* is important to start with, particularly since intercultural learning and intercultural competence revolve around gaining knowledge about and understanding people from cultures that differ from one's own. Culture, as a theoretical concept, has been reified and does not only play an immense role in shaping people's identities, but also affects what kind of attitudes and values individuals and different communities have and the choices they make. Throughout the years, numerous definitions of culture have been published across the world and most experts agree on one analogy when discussing culture; the iceberg model (Storti, 2009, p.274).

When hearing the word *iceberg*, many might draw parallels to the blockbuster film from 1997, *Titanic*, which depicts the maiden voyage of RMS Titanic and resulted in her sinking after colliding with an iceberg in 1912. For those of us who have seen the film, we remember the captain spotting a relatively large iceberg and desperately steering away in an attempt to avoid impact with the visible iceberg tip. Upon impact between the ship and the

iceberg, the actual mass hidden below the water surface had a substantially larger radius than anticipated, thus causing severe damages to the ship and eventually leading it to sink to the bottom of the ocean.

One could use the iceberg metaphor as a sound point of departure when discussing and trying to understand the elements of culture. According to Craig Storti (2009), the two main features of culture illustrated in the iceberg model are the visible (external) and the invisible (internal) elements (p. 274). Furthermore, he points out that many educators use different labels when describing the visible and invisible elements of culture; however he provides a simplified illustration when labelling behaviour as a visible element while values and assumptions are invisible elements of culture (Storti, 2009, p.275). It is also important to appreciate that the visible elements of culture, what a person says and/or does, are essentially affected by factors that are invisible and quite imperative to every human being. The question is then; where are these invisible elements acquired?

Harry C. Triandis (2002) quoted Clyde Kluchohn's (1954) psychological definition of culture when explaining that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals" (p. 3). People in different societies bring with them values, norms and traditions that have proven to work in the past and pass them on to younger generations. This is explained as the process of teaching people how to behave in their surroundings and also what is expected by individuals living in a certain culture (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy, 2013, p. 37). Geert Hofstede, Gert J. Hofstede and Michael Minkov (2010) broaden the understanding of culture by calling it a "collective programming of the mind" (p. 6). The programming which starts within a family, and subsequently becomes more intricate as individuals enter numerous social environments, essentially is one of the most important factors that help members of a certain group distinguish themselves from other groups. All notions on culture underscore that individuals are not born with a certain culture, but rather acculturate to traits of the particular culture they are born into and these traits manifest themselves through for instance language, religion, values and attitudes. Yet, this programming of the mind that Hofstede et al. (2010) point to is a very dynamic process that changes over time, just as cultures slowly evolve over time.

In connection with intercultural competence, the aspect of language and communication as a cultural trait is immensely important. As shown by Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2013), language is fundamental to all communication in all cultures, whether it is verbal or non-verbal, because it is through language and communication we

express thoughts, facts, emotions and ideas, which is a universal objective for all communication in all cultures (pp. 23-27). Language also has a cultural value because individuals identify both themselves, and others, through it (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3).

As has been noted, knowledge about different cultures and their traits is central when implementing intercultural topics and activities in the EFL classroom and I will proceed with presenting notions on intercultural competence and intercultural learning in the EFL classroom.

## **2.2 Intercultural competence and learning in EFL**

Theories on intercultural competence and intercultural learning rely heavily on anthropology, psychology and sociology, which make them highly interdisciplinary (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 149). Throughout the years, several definitions of intercultural competence and intercultural learning have been provided since the terms not only apply to language learning and language acquisition, but also to professions in the fields of health care, psychology, communication, business and social work, to name some. The common denominator for all these fields is the requirement of human interaction; both verbal and non-verbal communication.

In their introduction to the article *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching. A practical introduction for teachers* (2002), Michael Byram, Bella Gribkova and Hugh Starkey direct our attention to the fact that language learning consists of two parts: 1) to acquire “knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language” and 2) “the ability to use the language [that is being learned ] in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (p. 7). This implies that there is a cultural dimension to language learning and teaching and that the inseparable bond between language and culture must not be overlooked, particularly in EFL settings because of the global status English has today. One of the goals of EFL teachers all around the world has always been to promote communication between individuals with differing languages and cultures. Thus, the concept of *communicative competence* has dominated language pedagogy for several years and has served as a blueprint for what is expected by language learners concerning their linguistic competence in the specific language (Jensen, 1995, p. 41).

Dell Hymes (1972) initially presented the notion on communicative competence as a reaction to Noam Chomsky’s (1965) elaboration of linguistic competence. He considered the notion of linguistic competence in language learning too limited since it did not take into

account the social rules and functions of a language as it only focused on accuracy. Communicative competence encompasses an ability that “enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts” (Brown, 1994, p. 227). As a result, Hymes (1972) did not discard the level of accuracy in second or foreign language learning (L2), which referred to learners’ linguistic competence, but rather introduced a second element; fluency in language learning. In order to prevent communication from breaking down, learners had to learn how and when to use the target language accurately and focus more on meaning than form. However, as Byram (1997) points out, Hymes’ ideas were not targeted at the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT); they rather focused on communication and social interaction in a social group who used one specific language (p. 9). Thus, he did not examine cross-cultural communication, which refers to settings where people of different origins and with different cultural backgrounds interact with each other, which is one of the important aspects of EFL teaching and learning.

As an extension of the notions on communicative competence, several notions on *intercultural competence* have emerged, which emphasise how cultural influences and differences manifest themselves in communication through languages. In Europe, we associate with this term the time between 1780-1850, while initial research of the field in the USA concerned itself with equipping officers of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to communicate with people in countries they were dispatched to (Kramsch 2001, p. 202-203). Thus, intercultural competence refers to the “appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioural orientations to the world” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 9). The term interaction refers to both verbal and non-verbal interaction, and these are heavily affected by cultural and social traits.

Firstly, intercultural competence in the EFL classroom concerns itself with the learners and their needs for developing strategies and knowledge when communicating with people from other countries (Jensen, 1995, p. 41-42). Secondly, the goal of intercultural competence is to raise awareness of one’s own culture as well as other peoples’ culture and demonstrates an ability to “interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own” (Guilherme, 2000, p. 297). It is important that speakers of English as an L2 are equipped with the tools to not only communicate with people who have diverse linguistic backgrounds, but also who are culturally different from each other (Sinicrope, Norris & Watanabe, 2007, p. 1). This essentially requires EFL speakers to have a basic

knowledge about the target culture, as well as their own culture, not in respect of foods and clothing, referred to as material culture, which naturally are cultural traits, but also understanding other cultures in a political, historical and social context as well (Triandis, 2002, p. 3).

However, before educators even attempt to reflect on whether learners have attained some intercultural competence, or in other words; become interculturally competent individuals, we must establish what *intercultural learning* in fact is. Milton J. Bennett (2009) suggests that intercultural learning is “acquiring increased awareness of subjective cultural context (world view), including one’s own, and developing greater ability to interact sensitively and competently across cultural contexts as both an immediate and long-term effect of exchange” (p. S2). This entails that an interculturally competent individual is someone who has the ability to appreciate and respect worldviews that differ from her own. Some of the ways educators can facilitate this skill is to engage them in activities that require them to either physically engage in intercultural settings, or observe intercultural situations through, for instance, motion pictures, in addition to providing them with background knowledge. Derek Bok (2009) supports this notion when addressing the fact that educators must also include the subjective aspects of culture (internal), which refer to cultural values, ways of communicating and worldviews (p. xxiii) instead of merely focusing on the material aspects of culture (external).

One of the best known models for developing intercultural competence can be found in *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (1997). Here, Byram presents the *Multidimensional Model of Intercultural Competence (ICCM)*. The model illustrates the different competences (termed *savoirs*) an interculturally competent person should acquire and numerous definitions of intercultural competence are based on Byram’s model. The model was developed together with Geneviève Zarate, coined particularly for language teachers and learners. The model illustrates how different competences work in relation to each other when developing the intercultural competence of speakers/learners. The five factors that are illustrated in the model are attitudes, skills, knowledge and awareness in a critical manner. According to Byram (1997), these are all important for acquiring and building on intercultural competence in the EFL classroom.

The following model illustrates the competences connected to intercultural competence:

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

Figure 1. Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997, p. 34).

Byram (1997) identifies that *attitudes* (*savoir être*) of "[c]uriosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to other's meanings, beliefs and behaviours" are pivotal for intercultural encounters to be successful (p. 34). Byram (1997) also points out that both negative attitudes, namely prejudices and stereotypes, and positive attitudes can be equally damaging in the process of creating mutual understanding amongst people from different cultures (p. 34). In other words, when facilitating intercultural learning and development, it is important that learners have the skill of modifying attitudes, since these will not always be positive attitudes. According to Lawrence Kohlberg, Charles G. Levine and Alexandra Hower, (1983) this is an advanced psychological development, namely decentring (as cited in Byram, 1997, p. 34).

The next important factor in figure 1 is called *knowledge* (*savoirs*) and is divided in two categories. Byram (1997) explains the first category as "knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor's country" (p. 35). There will always be some knowledge, whether it is attained consciously or unconsciously, because all people have gone through the process of socialisation in their lives. Byram (1997) points out that during this process, people acquire knowledge of both the social and cultural group they belong to, as well as other groups since "perceptions of others are acquired in socialisation" (p.51). The second category is described as "knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels" (Byram 1997, p. 35). This component entails that learners need to have knowledge about one's own culture as well as one's own identity, both in connection with linguistic as well as behavioural aspects.

Michael Byram, Adam Nichols and David Stevens (2001) broaden the understanding by explaining that teachers are never able to provide learners with all the knowledge they

need in order to succeed in intercultural settings and teachers can focus just as much on the component *skills*, as on knowledge (p.6). Figure 1 illustrates two *skills* that are equally important for successful intercultural encounters. The first one is *the skill of interpreting and relating* (*savoir comprendre*) and is explained as the “[a]bility to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p. 52). In this context, documents that depict another culture can be visual texts (films and television reports) as well as language learner texts and travel brochures, Byram (1997) clarifies. (p. 52). Essentially, this process does not directly include a second speaker and allows learners who do not meet individuals from other cultures a chance to develop their ability to relate to other cultures. The skill also draws on existing schemas and calls for learners to be able to read, analyse and understand cultural meaning through documents. A crucial skill in any intercultural encounters is the ability to compare documents and acknowledge how misunderstandings arise and the reasons for these misunderstandings. In order to do this, the intercultural learners need a solid schema connected to the notion of social and cultural identity (Byram et al., 2001, p. 6).

The second aspect is *the skill of discovery and/or interaction* (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and is described as the “ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13). Unlike the skill of interpreting, it might take place in a social interaction and intercultural learners must have an ability to extract new knowledge through this interaction.

Finally, figure 1 displays a component in the very centre, namely *education* (*savoir s’engager*). This is regarded as the ultimate goal of an intercultural competent speaker/learner and is defined as “an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997, p. 63). This element emphasises the relevance of values and the importance of being aware of both one’s own values as well as the values of other people.

If this skill is demonstrated, learners should have the ability to recognise other perspectives than their own as well as evaluate these critically.

### **2.3 Intercultural competence in the National English Subject Curriculum**

In-service teachers are obliged to follow the rules and regulations appointed by The Ministry of Education and Research. The most recent curriculum reform in Norway came in

2006, namely The Knowledge Promotion (LK06) which covers primary, lower and upper secondary education and training. The curriculum emphasises English as a common core subject and it is expected that children acquire certain competencies already in year one in elementary school. This research concerns itself with learners at year 11 (Vg1) at upper secondary level enrolled in vocational programmes, thus the focus will primarily be on competence aims after year 12 (Vg2) programmes for vocational studies. English is an obligatory course for vocational learners in Vg1 and Vg2 and they may also be selected for an oral examination and/or a written examination in the final year of their upper secondary education. The curriculum applies for both Vg1 and Vg2, thus teachers in English as a common core subject in vocational classes also have considerable time to cover all the competence aims that learners are required to review before graduation.

English as a common core subject for vocational learners at upper secondary school does not only serve as an instrumental subject to develop their linguistic skills, in addition to developing their technical vocabulary connected to the study programme they are enrolled in, it should also provide learners with personal insight and a greater understanding of other cultures that might seem different from one's own. It is important to note that neither the National Core Curriculum for primary, secondary and upper education nor the English subject curriculum use specific terms such as "intercultural learning" and "intercultural competence" when discussing the importance of generating knowledge about learners' roles in the global community and learning about history in a way that expands their world views and also fosters acceptance for other world views.

In the descriptive part of what the purpose of the English subject curriculum is, the Ministry of Research and Education promotes the idea that English as a common core subject should facilitate the

[d]evelopment of communicative language skills and cultural insight [and that this] can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and cultural competence promote the general education perspective and strengthen democratic involvement and co-citizenship" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013, p. 2).

Furthermore, one of the four main subject areas, namely culture, society and literature, focuses on "cultural understanding in the broadest sense" (The Norwegian directorate for Education and Training, 2013, p. 3). Through various documents, the aim is the development of "knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013, p. 3). Judging from these



quotes, teachers can assume that promoting intercultural learning is given a considerable significance and should be regarded as part of learners' general education.

### **2.4 Rationale for employing films in the EFL classroom**

Popular media such as film, radio and television have played an immense role in our modern society and films produced in the USA have especially excelled throughout the history of motion picture. All members of a modern society, whether they are children, teenagers or adults, have some sort of experience with television and film. An annual survey conducted in 2014 by the Statistics Norway<sup>1</sup> showed that 74 per cent of the Norwegian population watched television on an average day and 22 per cent viewed video media during a day. Additionally, 88 per cent used internet on a daily basis. The survey does not say anything about the surfing habits of the participants. However, the statistics show that 82 per cent of the population between 16 and 24 years of age used streaming media to watch films (Statistics Norway 2014, p. 38). This is certainly no surprise, particularly since there is an increase in the use of both legal and illegal streaming and downloading programmes such as Netflix, Viaplay, HBO Nordic, Popcorn Time and The Pirate Bay. In 2015, eight out of the ten most popular films in Norwegian cinemas were produced in Hollywood<sup>2</sup>. Hence; these films primarily consist of dialogue that communicates meaning to the audience in English.

For several reasons, utilising films in the EFL classroom is suitable for promoting intercultural learning and competence. In order to promote intercultural learning and develop their intercultural competence, learners must be exposed to people and cultures that are different from their own and either observe interaction between people from different cultures, or engage in that interaction themselves. However, classrooms settings are quite restricted because learners very rarely meet other people besides their usual classmates and teachers. These days, EFL teachers do not have the means to physically remove learners from the traditional classroom settings and subject them to foreign surroundings like some other foreign language courses enable teachers to do. One way of exposing learners to other cultures and cultural settings that can resemble reality is through actively viewing motion pictures, as Alan B. Teasley and Ann Wilder propose in *Reel Conversations. Reading films with young adults* (1997).

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Norway (2014) «Norsk Mediarbarometer 2014» retrieved from: <http://www.ssb.no/kultur-og-fritid/artikler-og-publikasjoner/attachment/223839?ts=14d09e6cbf0>

<sup>2</sup> Treimo, V. (2015) «Her er de 10 mest sette filmene på norske kinoer i året som gikk» retrieved from: <http://www.filmweb.no/filmnytt/article1255026.ece>

Another justifiable reason for employing films in the EFL classroom is that some of the competence aims in the Norwegian national subject curriculum allow EFL teachers to include films for educational purposes. One of the competence aims in the English subject curriculum for vocational upper secondary classes after Vg1/Vg2 clearly expresses that learners should be enabled to “listen to and understand social and geographic variations of English from authentic situations” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013 p. 11). As several researchers have pointed out, films are excellent mediums for enabling this because they expose learners to different varieties of English in settings that attempt to mirror reality, depending on the film (Björk, Eschenbach & Svenhard 2014; Roell 2010; Teasley & Wilder 1997). In addition to this, they can also show the difference between how people communicate. Naturally, films are carefully planned mediums that can never replace real interaction and encounters, and are also artistic expressions. Nonetheless, they can illustrate how other peoples’ realities might be, how people from different countries interact, give them insight into some cultural traits of other societies and can also help them comprehend complex concepts through visual aids (Björk et al., 2015, p. 196).

Yet another competence aim that welcomes the use of films in the EFL classroom can be found in the main subject area called “Culture, society and literature”. This particular subject area concerns itself with expanding learners’ cultural understanding in English-speaking countries and calls for learners to “discuss and elaborate on English language films and other forms of cultural expressions from different media” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013, p. 11).

### **2.5 The Viewer-Response Approach**

One of the most practical methods of using films in the EFL classroom is through the *viewer-response approach*, presented by Teasley and Wilder (1997). The authors strongly advocate the idea that films are on par with literary texts in the sense that they hold many of the same properties in terms of analytical aspects as well as learning outcomes. The authors express that “[f]ilm is an art form that has a rightful place in the English curriculum” (p.6) because the objective of watching a film often is the same as reading a text where people wish to “lose themselves in a good story” (p. 6). With this in mind, films will be treated as equal to literary texts in this thesis.

In order to fully comprehend the objective of the viewer-response approach, we need to review *the reader-response* theory which serves as the cradle of Teasley and Wilder’s (1997) notion in the book *Reel Conversations. Reading films with young adults*. The viewer-

response approach is adapted from theory on the reader-response approach, a quite revolutionary didactic approach on the utilisation of literary texts in educational settings, as outlined by Louise Rosenblatt (1938, 1978). The reader-response approach insists that during any reading experience, a transactional process between the reader and the text takes place. Rosenblatt (1995) pointed to the fact that neither readers nor texts can be viewed as universal; “[a] novel or a poem or a play remains merely inkspots on a paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols” (p. 25). Her notion embraced the idea that one single text can generate many different interpretations and interactions, depending on the reader herself. Thus, the transactional process between reader and text occurs on an individual level. Rosenblatt’s approach focused on the reader experience where the personal connection readers create with the text was of great importance, as opposed to the more conservative way of teaching literature where this was dispraised. Judith Langer (1995) also supports this when writing about literary experiences in educational settings when she argues that both cultural and personal experiences influence readers’ interpretations of texts (p. 9). Much like Rosenblatt (1995), she challenges us to consider that the process of interpreting a text is extremely educational as long as learners have the freedom to do so.

Traditionally, the teaching and reading of literature in educational settings sought for learners to adopt the author’s intention and discard their own interpretations and perceptions of the literary text (Braaten & Erstad, 2000, p. 75). Rosenblatt’s theory emphasises the reader experience and the readers’ schemas connected to the topic of the text, consequently welcoming salient discussions and interpretations and essentially claiming that readers should no longer be viewed as secondary to the texts and the authors. The crux of this response theory is the active process of creating meaning through the process of reading and this can readily be transferred to films in educational settings through the viewer-response approach.

The viewer-response approach emphasises active viewing and dialogue as important elements;

The most obvious advantage of the viewer-response approach is that the approach calls for students to be active viewers - paying close attention to details, while they view, writing down their immediate responses, discussing their interpretations with their fellow students, and supporting their opinions with evidence from the film” (Teasley and Wilder 1997, p. 50).

Teasley and Wilder (1997) point to their observations where they recorded that engaging learners through films is more efficient because almost everyone will watch the film, as opposed to completing reading or viewing assignments at home (Teasley and Wilder,

1997, p. 50). By no means do the authors propose that reading activities should be substituted with viewing activities all together. However, varying instruction in such a manner can also engage learners who might have difficulties reading or struggle with attention deficit, among other challenges educators can encounter in a classroom.

When implementing the viewer-response approach in an EFL classroom, Teasley and Wilder (1997) insist that a viewing guide is essential. The viewing guides are devoted to different segments of the film and are developed by the teacher. The format of such viewing guides depends on the length of the film and the scope of the topic or assignment. Each viewing guide consists of three parts; the first section is designed for commenting on visual images, the second section for vivid music or sounds and the third part is a set of discussion questions. After each viewing, time for discussion is allotted and this is where learners share their responses to what they just watched. Essentially, the viewing guide calls for learners to be attentive and receptive to input from the film as well as from their peers. In other words; learners are active participants, even though they are not speaking to each other during the viewing.

### **3.0 The didactic framework**

The classroom project in this thesis was conducted in a vocational class in Vg1 enrolled in the study programme Health and Youth Development. English as a common course is obligatory for these learners and intercultural learning is not only relevant in the English course, but also in one of their three vocational courses called “communication and collaboration”. When designing the study and the teaching outline, it was important to include some elements from the learners’ vocational training so that they were able to use already acquired knowledge. One of the reasons for doing this is because EFL teachers at vocational schools are required to implement relevant aspects from vocational courses in the common course. Another reason is that I consider part of my job as an EFL teacher to include teaching material that engages them beyond the classroom setting.

Statistically, the dropout rate in Norwegian upper secondary schools has been the highest among vocational learners; only 58 per cent of vocational learners complete their education within five years (Statistics Norway, 2015). Based on previous statistics, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training launched an extensive project in 2014 called *FYR Fellesfag, yrkesretting og relevans* to help this group of learners. The project’s framework states that the competence aims in common core subjects and vocational subjects

should be contextualized and orientated towards the different vocational programmes and that this should lead to learners seeing the common core subjects as useful in their general education (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2014, p. 4-5). In short, the initiative calls for common core teachers to select topics and use material that have a certain utility value across subjects. Since the English course curriculum no longer has a fixed syllabus, EFL teachers can freely choose material, methods, and assessment forms, as long as the standards in the national curriculum are followed and the guidelines in the educational act are not violated.

It has already been established why films can serve as excellent tools to promote intercultural learning in EFL classrooms and this chapter will give a short introduction to the film *Crash*. Furthermore, this chapter will also present the most relevant intercultural elements of the film as well as present a detailed explanation of the teaching outline conducted in the class.

### **3.1 Introduction to the film *Crash***

The film *Crash* (Haggis, 2004) illustrates a series of unsettling accidental events that take place in Los Angeles during the course of 36 hours in which we meet people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. After its release in 2004, *Crash* won the prestigious Academy Award for Best Motion Picture in 2006<sup>3</sup> and has been praised for including a multi-ethnic cast and creating roles for ethnicities that otherwise seemed to be non-existent in Hollywood at the time of the film's release. In the film, written and directed by Paul Haggis, we meet several characters whose lives become intertwined in a series of uncomfortable incidents. The film is thematically powerful, and while some critics claim that *Crash* exaggerates the cultural, racial and ethnic conflicts we encounter today and that some of the characters are conveyed as caricatures, it serves as an engaging vessel to illustrate the complexity of a multicultural society.

All characters are extremely self-righteous and prejudice affects their lives tremendously, partly because they display prejudice against other people but also because they experience it themselves. *Crash* can be categorised as a post-modern film, where all these interesting stories and individual perspectives intersect and there is a seamless transition between the different scenes. One of the most interesting aspects of this film, which also might be why it was such a success with the audience, is the fact that the filmmakers

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<sup>3</sup> The Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0375679/awards>

exemplify how racism and bigotry can take multiple forms and that no member of any group is immune to experiencing prejudice, stereotyping and hate.

Throughout the film, we witness incidents where the characters are forced to re-evaluate their perspectives and reflect on the fact that they all act the way they do because they essentially are afraid of the unknown. All the characters are seemingly cruel and heartless, judging people either by their appearances or by preconceived ideas they hold about other cultures and ethnic minorities, without wanting to learn more about them. They also victimise themselves and rationalise their actions by pointing fingers at everything that is wrong, without accepting the fact that they themselves are causing this great divide between people. The film elegantly illustrates how uncertainty and fear of the unknown causes people to build walls around themselves, thus impeding proper communication and building relations with people who are essentially not that different from themselves. It also provokes viewers to re-think their own worldviews and calls for an evaluation of their own prejudices and fears. In the following sections I will present some of the dominant intercultural elements in *Crash* and will illustrate these elements by pointing to specific scenes in the film.

### **3.2 Intercultural dimensions in *Crash***

**Stereotypes and prejudice.** One of the most interesting aspects of *Crash* is that it includes minority groups which, before the film's release, seemed to be missing from cinematography. Ethnic groups represented in the film are African-Americans, Latinos, Iranians and Koreans as well as white Americans. *Crash* illustrates racial stereotypes and prejudice among all ethnicities represented in the film, and it gives examples of prejudice among the rich and the poor and the sick and the healthy. Perhaps the most interesting part of the film is how every single character in *Crash* holds prejudicial and negative stereotypical assumptions about other people, regardless of whether they share the same ethnicity or not. This not only impedes proper communication between the different parties, but also fosters segregation and ostracism in the small community that *Crash* portrays.

When defining stereotyping, Byram et al. (2002) write that it “involves labelling or categorising particular groups of people, usually in a negative way, according to preconceived ideas or broad generalisations about them – and then assuming that all members of that group will think and behave identically” (p. 27). In human society, stereotyping is used as a tool to categorise people because there is a latent level of uncertainty connected to these groups. It is when we encounter people or places we do not have much background knowledge about that

we turn to stereotypes, because it removes uncertainty in those given situations. According to Samovar et al. (2013), humans have a “psychological need to categorize and classify” (p. 222) and Richard Brislin (2000) claims that stereotypes serve as “shortcuts to thinking” (p. 199). Attitudes and feelings targeted at specific groups can be viewed as neutral, positive or negative, depending on how they are interpreted. Stereotypes that are negative are possible bases for bias, discrimination and prejudice and leave very little room for individuality (Li, 2013, p. 88-89). Negative stereotypes are typically discriminatory and are constructed when fear for people not belonging to one’s own culture and/or race arises. In intercultural encounters, carrying with us negative stereotypes can hinder successful communication since these stereotypes normally are built on ideas about groups or people that generally do not apply to them, as is the case with most stereotypes.

In intercultural settings the goal is to get to know the other person, or other groups, by gaining knowledge about their culture and themselves. Whenever we find ourselves in such settings there is normally a level of uncertainty there, particularly when we do not have enough knowledge about the other person or culture. One thing we do know for sure is that they belong to a social and cultural circle which has impacted their identity and sense of belonging and this process is something all human beings have in common. If the other person belongs to another cultural or social circle we tend to view them as “the other”. Hofstede et al (2010) explains that people intuitively classify people in groups. “In-groups refer to what we intuitively feel to be “we”, while out groups refers to “they”, Hofstede et al. (2010) write (p. 16). When this classification occurs, we use whatever schema that exists as a tool to categorise people and while people tend to turn to stereotypes in these situations, others might also lean on prejudicial attitudes, which are much more complex and difficult to alter.

While stereotypes are perceptions of “the other”, and essentially also about ourselves, which can be quite neutral ideas, in the sense that they can be mere reflections of what we have heard from our peers, prejudices are rooted in our emotional response to other groups, and can thus be viewed as extreme stereotypes. The word itself can be broken down as such: *pre*, which means before and *judice*, which is a form of the word judge (Cushner & Brislin 1996, p. 274). Stephanie Houghton (2013) writes that prejudice “finds its roots in social categorisation and involves the tendency to evaluate negatively” (as cited in Houghton 2014, p. 18). In other words, prejudice is the act of pre-judging people based on labels such as sex, occupation, religion, skin colour as well as race and are rooted in stereotypes. This concurs

with Brislin's (2000) notion where he claims that prejudice is "a set of beliefs about others, which are captured in stereotypes, but it is also a deeply felt set of feelings about what is good and bad, right and wrong" (p. 209). Furthermore, he broadens the understanding of prejudice by explaining that people pre-judge because they gain something from it.

One of the most powerful scenes in *Crash*, which exemplifies the detrimental features of stereotypes and prejudice, appears in the very beginning of the film. Anthony and Peter are two young African-Americans who steal exclusive cars for a living. In this particular scene, they are walking out of a diner and Anthony explains to Peter how he felt that the waitress was racist towards them and complained that they did not get the service they deserved because they were black. Peter points out that the waitress also was black, but Anthony still believes that she was being racist. On the other side of the road, Rick, the district attorney of Los Angeles, and his wife Jean are walking back to their car after having a luxurious dinner at one of the restaurants in the neighbourhood. Jean notices Anthony and Peter and grabs hold of Rick's arm. The following dialogue depicts Anthony's reaction to this small gesture:

Anthony: "Wait, wait, wait. You see what that woman just did? Did you see that?"

Peter: "She's cold".

Anthony: "She got colder as soon as she saw us, dawg... Man, look around you man. You couldn't find a whiter, safer or better lit part of this city right now. But yet, this white woman sees two black guys who look like UCLA students, strolling down the sidewalk and her reaction is blind fear. I mean, look at us dawg. Are we dressed like gangbangers? Huh? No! Do we look threatening? No! In fact if anybody should be scared around here, it's us. We're the only two black faces surrounded by a sea of over-caffeinated white people patrolled by the trigger-happy LAPD. So you tell me why aren't we scared?"

Peter: "Cause we got guns?"

Anthony: "You could be right." (Haggis 2004, 00:08:35-00:09:18)

Succeeding this long dialogue, the young men run towards the car and threaten the couple with weapons before stealing the car. This scene is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, Anthony is not in the wrong when pointing out that Jean was feeling threatened by them and acted on this fear. However, he fails to realise that Peter and himself embody all the negative qualities he accuses other people of labelling him by. Anthony's perception of himself and his actions is not rooted in reality and throughout the film we constantly see him blaming others for being less fortunate, thus making excuses for himself. This is an example of one of the four functions of prejudice that Brislin (2000) lists in his writing, namely the ego-defensive function: "[w]hen people hold ego-defensive prejudices, they are *protecting*



themselves from admissions that aspects of themselves or their culture may be inadequate” (p. 183).

**Cultural and racial identity.** In the field of social science, identity is a much investigated concept. In their book, *Communication Between Cultures*, Samovar et al. (2013) refer to Stella Ting-Toomey’s (2005) definition when explaining identity as the “reflexive self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic and individual socialization process. Identity basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images” (p. 206). In the simplest terms, identity revolves around who we are and who others believe we are. In settings where intercultural development is the objective, identity is of importance because one’s perception of oneself influences and guides “the expectations about your own and other’s social roles” around you (Samovar et al. 2013, p.205). In the film *Crash*, there is one particular character who seems to be very confused when it comes to defining his identity.

Farhad is an Iranian-American who runs a small shop together with his wife. He speaks very little English and is dependent on his daughter, Dorri, to be his translator, which is a paradox because many of his costumers speak English. Time and time again, his shop has been vandalised and Farhad claims that the aftermath of 9/11 has made people more hostile towards people with Middle-Eastern background. He is very adamant when expressing that he has an American citizenship, thus he is an American, and refuses to be treated as anything else. Nevertheless, he has a very strong connection to Iran and refuses to learn English. His ethnic identity and definition as an Iranian is particularly obvious when Farhad realises that the burglars who recently destroyed his store thought he was an Arab, which, to him and his family, is very offensive. (Haggis, 2004, 00:47:48-00:47:56). Because people do not view him as an American, nor an Iranian, Farhad is constantly angry and feels rejected by society as well as discriminated against.

**Power distance as a cultural dimension.** The power distance relationship as a cultural trait is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 61). In certain cultures, people simply accept that there is an uneven distribution of power. In *Crash*, Jean is regarded as an upper class prude and seems to believe that she is above everyone. We do not get to know much about her, but she is the district attorney’s wife and lives in a beautiful mansion, where she also has a Hispanic maid, Maria. Her treatment of the maid exemplifies the power distance relationship in one particular scene

where she scolds Maria because she has not taken out the dishes from the washer (Haggis, 2004, 00:24:40-00:25:06). The class difference between these two individuals is manifested in this scene and Maria accepts Jean's degrading comments.

Maria is Hispanic, and even though her ethnicity is never clearly expressed in the film, it is safe to assume that she is from Mexico since the majority of Hispanics in Los Angeles are Mexican. Hofstede et al. (2010) measure the degree of inequality in society through the Power Distance Index (PDI) and their statistics show that Mexico displays high power distance values where employees are afraid of disagreeing with their employers (p.57). Thus, Maria views her employer as an authority and does not challenge Jean's position.

Another scene that exemplifies the power distance as a cultural trait is a conversation between Officer Hanson and his superior, lieutenant Dixon. Officer Hanson is a novice police officer and is a white American. He asks lieutenant Dixon, an African-American veteran in the LAPD force, to be assigned to a new partner reporting that he has witnessed a racist act performed by his partner. Lieutenant Dixon takes offence at this accusation as it entails that he, as the lieutenant, has failed to control his staff and such an allegation is potentially harmful for the LAPD's reputation (Haggis, 2004, 00:32:02-0033:40). One persistent social issue in American society is that law enforcers have been accused of being prejudiced against the African-American population. Every year, the media publish articles where African-American males are mistreated by white law enforcers. From lieutenant Dixon's perspective, such an allegation is unacceptable and, even though Officer Hanson's report is truthful, he uses his authority to threaten Officer Hanson to come up with another reason for transferring to another partner.

### **3.3. Teaching outline**

As mentioned earlier, English as a common course no longer has a fixed syllabus, which allows EFL teachers to select and utilize teaching material from different sources, implement different didactic methods and adapt them to the specific classes as well as, to some extent, select topics very freely. In this particular class, all English lessons are comprised in one day which means I instruct them for 135 minutes each week. The class project started in the beginning of April 2016 and we spent 4 weeks working with this project. An additional week was used for writing a formal analysis of *Crash*, but these texts are not part of the data material for the research study because the assessment focused on writing and structuring a formal text. The overarching topic is "Life and Society in North America" and we had already discussed the waves of immigrants that came to the US and what characterises

a multicultural society. Many of the tasks are collaborative and the learners discuss a lot with each other. The learning goals are primarily selected from the main section in the English course curriculum called “culture society and literature” and are adapted for the specific teaching plan. The phrasing of the learning goals is also adapted for the learners as they also are presented to these aims for each session. Additionally, the learning goals that are presented in the teaching outline are only connected to the intercultural aspect of the class project. When the class project was conducted, additional learning goals connected to written and oral skills in several lessons, but since these are not relevant to the research question of this thesis, they are not included.

We have something called “makkergrupper” (partner groups) in this class where learners have designated desks in the classroom and work in fixed groups consisting of four learners for several weeks. The form teacher decides these groups and they apply for all lessons. In our English lessons, these groups are a tremendous advantage because learners know exactly who to work with and where to sit every time they have collaborative tasks. Also, since they work together in these groups for several weeks at a time, they become very comfortable with each other and form a special relationship. In the teaching outline, whenever they have group work and the group number is not specified, they work in these fixed partner groups.

### 3.4 The teaching plan in detail

The following section will present the teaching plan for each week and my rationale for working with these activities. In weeks 1-3 we use 135 minutes working with the project. In week 4, we only use 90 minutes of the lessons for working with the intercultural aspect of this film project.

**Week 1 (135 minutes).** The first week prepares learners for some of the important concepts in the film and the learning goals for week 1 are as follows:

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- know what the concepts stereotype, prejudice, racism, ethnocentrism and discrimination mean</li> <li>- be able to explain and discuss these (in English) in groups</li> <li>- identify and reflect on your own stereotypes and prejudgments</li> </ul> |
|---|

The homework for this week is to watch the official trailer for the film *Crash* and read about the film on the website The Internet Movie Database (IMDb). The trailer is retrieved from YouTube<sup>4</sup> and posted on our learning platform It’s Learning, along with the link from

<sup>4</sup> *Crash* (2004) official trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=durNwe9pL0E>

IMDb<sup>5</sup>. When we meet in class, learners get approximately 10 minutes to sit in groups and discuss what they discovered through watching the trailer and reading about the film. While they discuss in groups, I observe and listen to their conversations and am available if there are any questions. We then move to the presentation of the central concepts connected to the film which are: stereotypes, prejudice, racism, ethnocentrism and discrimination. These concepts are familiar to them because they have already covered them in one of their vocational courses. I use a very traditional way of presenting these concepts through a Power Point presentation and learners are naturally able to ask questions as we go along, which often happens in this class.

After this, we move on to a more practical task. Learners are given a worksheet called “Stereotyping”, which can be found in appendix 3. For the first part of this worksheet, they work individually and are asked to describe some of the characters from the film based on film stills from *Crash* that I found online. This activity can be a double-edged sword because, in the simplest terms, learners are asked to stereotype. My intention with this activity is to raise their awareness and make them reflect on the effects of stereotyping people and they will do this individually because cultural presumptions normally are unconsciously stored (Houghton 2014, p. 18). These presumptions are very individual and learners might have different schemas connected to the different ethnic groups that are portrayed in the pictures. Referring to Samovar et al. (2013), the act of stereotyping is a psychological need because we need to classify people in order to attain a coherent world view; hence, altering or leaving these stereotypes is very difficult. After they have written their descriptions of the characters, they will work in groups of two and present their descriptions of the characters to each other. Here, they will be able to see whether they label people in the same way and also reflect on what they focused on when they labeled these characters. The objective is not to cancel stereotypes completely; however, the activity will hopefully raise their awareness and make them dwell on the functions of prejudicial stereotypes.

In the final lesson, they will work in their partner groups and answer the discussion questions before we have a plenary discussion where they present their answers in class. Cognitive development through social interaction has proved to be very efficient in this particular class and the learners have also responded positively to this work method because it is also used frequently in their vocational courses.

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<sup>5</sup> Information about the film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0375679/>

**Week 2 (135 minutes).** This week, we start viewing the film *Crash*. Below are the learning aims designed for this part of the film project:

- give account for how cultural diversity is portrayed in *Crash*
- gain knowledge about central concepts such as stereotypes, prejudice, racism, ethnocentrism and discrimination and be able to discuss these concepts
- understand how stereotyping and prejudice can affect human relations
- be critical against stereotypes and prejudicial portrayals in popular media

A brief introduction to the plot of the film is given as well as I point to the central concepts they should focus on. Additionally, the purpose of the viewing guides is explained. Moving on, the first viewing guide for *Crash* will be distributed. The viewing guide is designed according to Teasley and Wilder's (1997) recommendations in *Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adult* and the first viewing guide can be found in appendix 4. The first viewing session lasts for approximately 10 minutes and learners will take notes in their viewing guides while watching the film. When the film is paused, approximately 10 minutes are allotted for discussing the learners' responses. All the questions in the first viewing guide are open-ended which means that all learners will be able to answer these.

The second viewing guide is distributed to the learners (see appendix 5) and they resume watching the film. I fast-forward the film 2 minutes, so we resume at approximately 38 minutes. This scene displays sexual content and since some of the learners are quite shy and insecure, I find it best to skip this part as it does not add any crucial information about neither plot nor characters. The questions in the second viewing guide are more complex and less open-ended and learners will be asked to answer as precisely as they can. After watching the second segment, another 15 minutes are allotted for discussion.

The third, and last, viewing guide (appendix 6) is distributed and the class resumes watching the rest of the film. Since we do not have any time for discussion in this lesson, learners write their responses and the discussion will be conducted the following week.

In this intercultural film project, the viewing guides are immensely important. During these viewing activities, learners must actively engage with the film and during the plenary discussions, learners are required to share their responses. Such a social constructive approach entails that in order for cognitive development to take place, an individual or several individuals who are superior in knowledge have to be engaged in the activity (Woolfolk 2004, p. 74). There is no guarantee that the activity will be a success, because all learners initially start with the same schema connected to the film since none of them have seen it before.

However, their cultural capital can be an asset here and my role as a teacher is to be the facilitator and help them out if the discussion activities come to a halt. Regarding the viewing guides, there is a chronological progression in them. Thus, the discussion questions in the first viewing guide are more general, since they only watch 10 minutes of the film. Then, the questions in the second and third viewing guides become more specific.

**Week 3 (135 minutes).** The lesson starts with a revision of the film and the class gets approximately 15 minutes to discuss their responses to the third viewing guide. The intercultural learning goals for week 3 lessons are the same as the week before:

- give account for how cultural diversity is portrayed in *Crash*
- gain knowledge about central concepts such as stereotypes, prejudice, racism, ethnocentrism and discrimination and be able to discuss these concepts
- understand how stereotyping and prejudice can affect human relations
- be critical against stereotypes and prejudicial portrayals in popular media

As with the previous discussion sessions, learners are expected to express thoughts and opinions as well as be receptive to other interpretations of the film. When we finish discussing the last viewing guide, the class receives a new worksheet called “Reading films”. This worksheet can be found in appendix 7. In the first task, “Timeline”, learners are allowed to work in groups. The three next tasks, “Creative Writing”, “Character Profile” and “Character Profile continued” are all individual tasks. Learners who struggle with dyslexia can record their response to the last task and submit an audio file if they wish to. Learners submit all tasks on It’s Learning by the end of the day’s lessons.

**Week 4 (90 minutes).** This week, only 90 minutes of the lessons are devoted to working with the intercultural film project. The class gets an assignment called “My Story” and the intercultural learning goals for this assignment are as follows:

- use the knowledge gathered from working with the film project and social issues in the US to create an interesting story
- be able to view the world from another perspective
- show an ability to *value* other viewpoints and individuals
- illustrate an understanding of how stereotypes and prejudices can be incorrect depictions of people

Learners have access to sources such as internet and textbooks if this is necessary and will decide for themselves how long they want their text to be. The task is as follows:



*Everyone acts the way they do, think the way they do and say what they do because they have experienced different things. Everyone has a unique story. In this final task you will choose one character and put yourself in his or her shoes. Write a text where you tell the reader about your life and why you have become the type of person you are today. Focus both on positive and negative aspects of the character.*

*Remember to be clear about which character you have chosen.*

*Submit your text on It's Learning before the lunch break.*

The objective of this task is to increase learners' cultural sensitivity by asking them to write a creative text where they are allowed to be another person. The assumption is that after viewing such a powerful film as *Crash*, which portrays a multi-ethnic community and the difficulties this brings with it, they gain a deeper understanding of the fact that stereotypes and prejudices towards other people can be detrimental because it never allows you to fully know another person or a group. The ability to understand other people's world views is immensely important, particularly since we live in a world where these perspectives are easily transmitted through modern communication. Additionally, the assignment also attempts to promote an understanding of stereotypes and prejudices being based on emotions and feelings and when learners change their mindset and try to view the world from another person's perspective, they also realise that both stereotypes and prejudices can be altered over time. During this process, they should also gain more knowledge about the other culture (or cultures) as well as their own culture by comparing differences and similarities.

#### **4.0 Methodology**

The empirical part of this paper presents a modest research project conducted in one vocational upper secondary class in Norway. As an in-service teacher, I am very interested in exploring different methodologies in my EFL classrooms and am very fond of using popular media as teaching material to complement the course book I use in my classrooms. This

chapter will present the method used to collect data, some general information about the participants and how they were informed about my research project.

#### **4.1 The qualitative case study methodology**

The objective of this thesis is to investigate how the film *Crash* can be used in an EFL class at upper secondary level to promote intercultural learning and reflect on what learners ultimately learned about racism, discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice after working with the class project. Upon deciding which methodology would best serve this purpose, it was very clear that a qualitative approach was the most appropriate one. Sandra L. McKay (2006) asserts that any qualitative research of classroom learning must be studied holistically, taking into account varying factors in the classroom such as learners' level of maturity, their proficiency level in English, as well as emotional and social needs, to name some (p. 6). Additionally, she reports that the qualitative method attempts to reach general conclusions based on the data analysis in addition to consisting of a limited amount of participants (McKay 2006, p. 8). Although this research study is not generalisable, as it was conducted in a specific setting with a limited group of learners, it does present some interesting data that shows how the film *Crash* can be used in the EFL classroom and how the didactic approach in the class project can promote intercultural learning.

There are naturally some limitations to this research study. Firstly, the responses found in my data are selected by me. Here, I could have included more nuanced responses to illustrate how the classroom activities did not work. Also, the teaching outline is designed and adapted for one specific class. Some of the questions were also too vague and some of the weaker learners had difficulties answering these. Finally, even though the data material clearly shows that the film project indeed did facilitate intercultural learning, I also appreciate that there are several other ways of assessing intercultural competence. However, Byram's (1997) model served as the most appropriate for these particular activities.

#### **4.2 The participants**

The primary data material in this study has been collected from one vocational class (Vg1) enrolled in the study programme Health and Youth Development. The class consists of 20 learners, aged 16-17. Initially, all learners signed the consent letter, but by the end of the class project, I was only granted permission to use responses in my research study from 16 of the participants. It was decided that two of the learners were to be moved to a special class in English due to their low proficiency levels, and two withdrew from the agreement, as they were entitled to.



Among the learners who granted me permission to use their texts, there are two boys in the class. Five of the participants have a multicultural background from Asia, the Middle-East and Eastern-Europe while the rest of the group is from the local area in South-Eastern Norway. The group is very diverse and the learners come from different family backgrounds. There are some individuals in this class who have experienced bullying, lived in foster homes, suffer from different anxiety disorders, traumas and are diagnosed with ADHD. The group also represents individuals with dyslexia and different linguistic struggles both in Norwegian and English. The majority has better oral than written skills in English, but one pupil has lived in Northern-America and has a high proficiency in English.

Only a handful of the learners read books in their spare time, preferably in Norwegian, but all of them primarily watch English-speaking movies and series. Before selecting the film for the class project, it was important for me to choose a film that also interested the two boys. They had reported that many of the films they had watched at school throughout the years were too “girly” and did not really appeal to them. *Crash* is one of those films that embody many of the characteristics that can attract a wide audience: it delivers a strong message to the viewers, calls for an evaluation of one’s own perceptions and world views, informs us about social issues that may arise in multicultural societies, speaks to the emotional part of the viewer and also has some humorous elements in it.

#### **4.3 Information, consent and permission**

Prior to informing the learners that I wished to conduct a research study in the class, a formal request was sent to the headmaster of the school (see appendix 1). After receiving a positive response, I proceeded with informing the learners. I distributed the consent letters to all learners (see appendix 2) and we went through what participating in a research project entailed. Since the participants were under aged, and also had a personal relationship with me as their English teacher, it was important that they understood their right to withdraw from the study, at any time, and also that all data which was collected would be entirely anonymous when discussed in the research project. However, I also made it clear that despite the fact that I was conducting a research study, the classroom activities were rooted in the standards from the English subject curriculum and this was all part of their general education in the English course. The participants fully understood that withdrawing from the research study did not equal withdrawal from the class activities before signing the consent letter.

## 5.0 Findings and discussion

In this part of the thesis, the responses from the class activities will be presented and primarily be discussed in light of Byram's (1997) model (see figure 1 in section 2.2). Additionally, responses from the oral discussions during the three viewing sessions will supplement some of the written answers; however these responses were documented separately by me and not the learners. All names that are used are pseudonyms and the responses are also transcribed as they stand in the original documents. Hence, no corrections have been made regarding the participating learners' language.

The worksheets consist of a variety of activities, as described in section 3.4, and after reviewing all the data I decided to only include some of the responses in the rendition of the findings as well as remove some of the activities. My rationale for this is that some of the activities serve as preparatory for the final task where learners write a creative text, while the selection of responses presented and commented on in this part of the thesis best shed light on the research question. It is also noteworthy to address the fact that some of the intercultural elements in the film *Crash*, which are presented and analysed in sub-chapter 3.2, are not discussed in these findings. Personally, I deemed these scenes as potentially important intercultural elements; however the learners did not choose to comment upon these scenes in their responses.

### 5.1 Pre-viewing activity: Stereotyping

Learners responded to the pre-watching activities (see appendix 3). Firstly, they were asked to label characters based on their first impressions by looking at pictures of some of the characters in the film whom they hitherto were unfamiliar with:

Names of characters	Selected responses from the learners
Rick	He looks serious, business man, cares about money, rich, needs to control things, very handsome, upper class.
Jean	High self esteem, she looks scared or unconfident but don't want people to know, snobby, looks unhappy, she is powerful.
Anthony	"Gangsta", good at dissing people, looks like a rapper, black, young, drug dealer, he looks like typical black man who get in trouble with the police without doing something wrong.
Cameron	Someone really important, religious/pious, looks mysterious and creepy, looks like a nice guy (but is actually not?), a mafia boss.
Officer Ryan	"Bad cop", white man, he looks like a policeman that uses his power in a wrong way, working class.
Farhad	He looks like a dangerous man, "don't mess with me" face, scary, mafiaboss, from the middle east (the name).
Shanequa	Black woman, smart woman, alone mother, she looks kind, gives advice.
Daniel	Gangster, bad guy, he looks like a normal Mexican man, drug dealer, member of a gang, thief, works with "the bad guys" but he's actually a good guy.

Figure 2. Learners' responses to pictures of characters in *Crash*

Following this, they answered the discussion questions regarding stereotypes and the effects of them;

1. When you described these people, what did you focus on?  
**Hedda:** How they looks like, face, skin color, clothes.  
**Stian:** Facial expression, clothes, skin color, gender
  
2. Do you think some of your descriptions are stereotypes?  
**Monika:** Yes, you can't out of someones skin color know about them. Just because someone is dark does not mean they are "bad" peopel or that white peopel are nice.  
**Marianne:** Yes, I don't mean to, but i had to focus on the looks since I didn't know anything about them. But now I see that most of my first impressions are not that positive.  
**Susanne:** Yes, I don't mean to but I look at all the things above and the society my whole life has made a big deal about it and have had a lot of focus on it.  
**Linnea:** Maybe a little bit because I focused on their looks.
  
3. Do you stereotype people?  
**Monika:** I try not to do that because f.eks. country where they come from, not means what kind of people they are.  
**Hanna:** yes, but I think I do it without noticing and realicing it.  
**Mina:** Yes I do. And I am sorry for that.  
**Nanna:** I used to do that before because I was young and didn't have enough personal experience.
  
4. Can stereotyping help us in some way?  
**Mina:** Yes sometimes. It can help you find people that are more like yourself, and help you see people that are not good for you.  
**Silje:** No it just makes me judge people before I get to know them  
**Susanne:** No because it can lead to racism or prejudice.  
**Ingrid:** yes sometimes. It can help me in social situations. If invite a muslim for dinner I know that I should not serve pig because they do not eat it. Maybe not all of them, but just in case.
  
5. Why do you think people stereotype?  
**Marianne:** Because of culture, what you grew up with (like what everyone around you told you) and media.  
**Lars:** Because it's easy and people are quick to judge.  
**Annette:** To get a picture of who you are meeting and talking to.  
**Silje:** Maybe they have been trained to not liking people with different colors or background.
  
6. How can stereotypes be damaging?  
**Stian:** Because you prejudgje someone before you know then, and people migh be different than what you originally thought, so your opinion might hurt that person.  
**Mina:** You judge people before you know the truth. That is not good.
  
7. Do you think that it is a good idea to stereotype people?  
**Susanne:** Maybe for someone. If it's positive maybe. If I think that all teachers are tough with grades, I will work harder to get good grades for example.  
**Linnea:** No, it can ruin someones relationship and reputation and you might try to keep distance from the person you are stereotyping because they are usually negative.
  
8. How can being stereotyped hurt your job opportunities?  
**Hedda:** I heard in the news that people with not Norwegian names have harder to find and get jobs only because of their names.  
**Marianne:** If you belong to a culture that is always stereotyped negatively I think it would affect the chances for getting the job.
  
9. What is the difference between stereotypes and prejudices (fordommer)?

**Stian:** Prejudice is always negative. (for-dom – man dømmer før man vet). Stereotype is when you «skjærer alle over en kam».

**Silje:** If I stereotype someone it's because I have heard it before somewhere (with my friends or family) but it's not always true. Prejudice is when you have a negative opinion about a culture.

**Henriette:** I think prejudice is more personal. If I have had a bad experience with someone that will follow me for a long time and stereotype is just thinking something bad about people.

As explained in section 3.4, the objective of this activity is to activate learners' schemas regarding the concepts stereotypes and prejudice, before viewing the film *Crash*. The learners should also be able to reflect on their own stereotypes and prejudgments. The responses to the different pictures in figure 2 show that the learners have quite negative impressions of the majority of the coloured characters, and earlier I have mentioned that this activity could prove a risky one. Many of these learners live in areas with little multicultural influence and also attend a school where the majority of the learners are ethnic Norwegians. Based on theories regarding the act of stereotyping, one can assume that the learners who responded negatively have little or no knowledge about certain groups of people who belong to a different culture than their own (Hofstede et al., 2010; Samovar et al. 2010). Additionally, another plausible reason why learners react like this could also be that they have been influenced by popular media and they use this knowledge when labelling the characters. Media, such as television and film, can provide a unique insight into worlds, perspectives and values that are different from their own. However, Simon Cottle (2000) reports that research on the representations of ethnic minorities in media in the US and the UK “provide us with evidence of the general patterns, impoverished representations and sometimes starkly racist portrayal found in both the UK and US mainstream media” (p. 9). Even though the research investigated the negative representations of ethnic minorities in the UK and the US, it is reasonable to believe that these stereotypical depictions also impact teenagers in Norway, particularly since there has been an increase in the use of streaming programmes among the youth as well as the increasing popularity of Hollywood-films in Norwegian cinemas (Statistics Norway 2014; Treimo, 2015, 08.12).

The responses to the discussion questions in the pre-viewing activity also provide some interesting data. One can argue that some of the questions are quite suggestive, particularly questions 2 and 4. However, sometimes learners need a little push when discussing complex concepts such as prejudice and stereotypes and as long as the teacher does not impose her own ideas and opinions on learners, I do not find this to be unethical. Besides, the discussion questions invite learners to share their own beliefs and ideas which serve to facilitate an open, respectful and including learning environment. The responses show that learners can reflect on their own stereotypes and the ones who reacted negatively to some of

the characters also appreciate that they have indeed noted some negative stereotypes in their worksheets.

In question 2, Susanne makes a very valid point. She points out that physical appearance, such as skin colour, gender and clothes, is greatly emphasised in today’s society and has impacted her tremendously. In a sense, one can argue that the elements *attitudes* (savoir être) and critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager) from Byram’s (1997) model come into play here. She accepts that prejudice has affected her initial perception of the characters and also criticises some of the norms that are found in society. I am unsure whether she refers to general cultural traits in Norway, but I find it reasonable to believe that she most definitely is referring to her social environment. In retrospect, the learner should have been asked to elaborate on why she believes this has affected her negatively, but a plausible interpretation could be that she finds the norms and values in her social environment as bigoted, thus appreciating that her own stereotypes can be damaging. The learner demonstrates the ability to dispute “presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one’s own environment” which is an important step in developing intercultural competence (Byram 1997, p. 50).

### 5.2 The first viewing guide

For the first time in this class project, learners use the viewing guide when documenting their initial responses after only viewing the first 10 minutes of the film:

<i>Make notes here of any interesting visual images you notice:</i>	<i>Make notes here about what you hear (music, sound effects, the way the characters speak):</i>
<p><b>Henriette:</b> Angry black guys. Braids. Baggy clothes. Dark colors.</p> <p><b>Nina:</b> Angry Asian lady. Police lights. Car crash. Many nationalities: black, white, chinese, Indian? Baggy clothes. Han ene har sånne fletter som rappere ofte har.</p> <p><b>Stian:</b> Night. Black police officers, car crash. Very cold because white air come out of their mouth. Guns. Two angry black men. Fancy white husband and wife. Fancy car gets stolen.</p> <p><b>Linnea:</b> Very dark and cold. Smoking police. Black police. Car crash. One shoe found (Etterforskning). Detective = shocked. Highway. Red box.</p> <p><b>Marlene:</b> Very dark. Police cars, car crash. Car with the sign “coroner”. Dead boy. Lost shoe. New scene: yesterday. Guns. Light in trees, Christmas. White couple are attacked, car is stolen.</p>	<p><b>Stian:</b> Blake = breake (bremse??) Mexican. Osama (bin laden?). A lot of bad words. Police sirens. Black guys say: dawg, racism, fuck (a lot of times), gangbangers, says black and white a lot of times.</p> <p><b>Linnea:</b> Osama, Jihad. Speaking another language at gun store. A lot of screaming: person who sells guns is racist/rude.</p> <p><b>Lars:</b> Swearing words. Screaming at each other racist words: degos, Osama, jihad. Speaking another language, sounds arab. Osama+airplane = terrorist. Christmas music when the two black walk down the street.</p>

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Figure 3. Responses to visual and audial elements during the first viewing session

Initially, I did not expect learners to note very much as this was the first time they documented their responses in a viewing guide. However, the surprise was pleasant when I discovered that some learners noted that they saw many different nationalities, they heard a foreign language and some of them also noted the racist remarks exchanged between some of the characters. Additionally, one learner in particular was very attentive and observed the remark made against Farhad when he wanted to buy a gun; the shopkeeper accuses Farhad of being a terrorist by referring to the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Haggis 2004, 00:06:25-00:06:34).

### **Responses to discussion questions:**

2. What conflicts do you see developing?

**Hedda:** I think the two men who stole the car will be find by the police and arrested or killed because theyr'e black.

**Annette:** The girl got a gun with bullets, so something there happens. (Why did she get a gun??) I also think at something happen with the boys who steal the car. The couple that lost the car look rich so maybe they have GPS in the car and find them in the end and they getting killed?

3. What is the mood of the film so far?

**Linnea:** I think something bad happen. Everything are so dark and everybody are so angry

**Marianne:** To be honest, it all seems very depressing. I haven't seen any cheerful moments so far.

4. What themes do you see emerging in the film?

**Henriette:** I think one of the themes are multiculturalism and I think maybe people will fight a lot with each other. We have seen different races so maybe we will se more racism because they are in USA.

**Marianne:** I think definitely racism is one of the main themes in this film. People also seem to judge eachother alot. Up to now we've seen people being treated bad because of their race and a lot of name calling. I hope the movie ends with a positive vibe, but I'm not sure.

The discussion questions in the first viewing guide are relatively open-ended, because the class only watched the first 10 minutes of the film. Teasley and Wilder (1997) suggest that these questions can be used with any part of a film, thus the questions are designed to engage learners and trigger their curiosity (p. 55). Questions 2 and 4 ask learners to use foreshadowing in determining what they expect to happen in the rest of the film. As the activity of viewing a film is a process of transaction of previous knowledge and experience connected to the topic of the film, I expected various responses here (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). The responses show that learners appreciate that some of the themes in the film are connected to racism, stereotyping and prejudice, which also shows that the learners paid close attention to what they saw on screen and processed this information. In relation with intercultural learning, the responses show that learners display, to some extent, an ability to predict what

intercultural issues will be presented in the film, even though very little information has been provided for them. According to Byram’s (1997) model (see figure 1), the skill of discovering (savoir apprendre) is either drawn from existing knowledge or no knowledge at all (p. 38). Essentially, the skill of discovering serves as a building block and aids learners to gain more knowledge than they originally had and structure this new information accordingly.

### 5.3 The second viewing guide

#### Responses to visual and audial elements:

<i>Make notes here of any interesting visual images you notice:</i>	<i>Make notes here about what you hear (music, sound effects, the way the characters speak):</i>
<p><b>Hedda:</b> Jean and Rich lives in a big house. They look rich. Jean is angry. lock man is kriminal??</p> <p><b>Marianne:</b> The cop from the first scene investigates another murder.</p> <p><b>Stian:</b> Yellow tape. Dead person. Jean and Rich have a fancy house. One lady calls Jean “miss Jean”. Maybe she work forher?</p> <p><b>Nina:</b> Police lights (again). Nobody smiles nowhere. Dark colors. Stopped by the police.</p>	<p><b>Annette:</b> Sad music when something sad happen. Many people scream bad things against the black people.</p> <p><b>Henriette:</b> Words like “niggah”, “bitch”, “fuck” by the Anthony and Peter. Spenningsmusikk.</p> <p><b>Kamilla:</b> Indian/arabisk music.</p> <p><b>Lars:</b> arguing when they come home, the feeling got a bit tenns because they scream.</p>

Figure 4. Responses to visual and audial elements during the second viewing session

Judging by the comments on both visual and audial images in *Crash*, the learners show an interest in the continuation of the plot and an eagerness to extract information through the second viewing activity. As is the purpose of the viewer response approach, they become active participants and point to several interesting incidents in this segment of the film. When addressing audial elements, Annette reports that there is a lot of animosity against the African-American characters, while Henriette points to some derogatory expressions used quite frequently by Peter and Anthony. The responses in figure 4 are not necessarily crucial in this chapter; however they illustrate the effect of using viewing guides in the EFL classroom. During the discussion session, both learners who are comfortable with participating orally in class as well as the timid learners were eager to share their responses.

#### Responses to discussion questions:

3. Do you think Jean really was afraid of Anthony and Peter when she saw them on the street? Explain why you think this.

**Mina:** I think she was, because it’s many people that thinks that black people are dangerous.

**Henriette:** Yes I think that Jean was afraid of Anthony and Peter when she saw them on the street. She get closed to her husband when she saw them.

**Lars:** Yes because she said it at home, that she was scared. But she didn't actually know that they had guns.

4. How do Anthony and Peter justify the way they act against white people?

**Ingrid:** They mean they are racist, and then they have a reason and rights to act the way they do. I think they have experienced racism before and want to (unngå) it today.

**Lars:** Anthony talks down about white people but I didn't see anyone treat him badly, so I don't get why he hates everyone, even the black waitress.

**Marianne:** Anthony and Peter constantly complain that they are treated as criminals, but they ARE!. They think they have a right to act the way they do and say what they say because they think white people already are negative toward them. Just look at how they behave and how hostile they're against (white) people! How can they expect people to treat them nicely when they act like that??

**Nora:** I definitely think they have experienced racism in the past. No one is like that because they want to be like that.

5. Explain how you felt when Officer Ryan stops Cameron and Christine. Did they deserve to be treated that way? Why did they get pulled over?

**Hedda:** no because officer ryan is racist and treat black people different from how he treats white people. I got angry.

**Stian:** They got pulled over because it looks like Christine gives Cameron a blowjob when he was driving. I understand that they got pulled over because it is not allowed to do that in public and they could be a danger for the traffic but the officer used his power wrong.

**Susanne:** It was unfair and I got angry on Ryan but also Cameron. But I think Cameron was too afraid to talk back to the officer because he knew that he had the power to do something worse to him because he's black.

**Marianne:** Cops looking for Anthony and Peter and Christine: Cameron drove the same type of car. Right before they get pulled over, officer Hanson says that it's clearly not the right car, but officer Ryan stops them. He sexually harasses Christine. It looked like he really enjoyed using his power over them and that made me very angry and sad. It makes me think of the fact that police in USA often mistreat black people just because they feel it's ok to be racist.

6. Give examples of scenes/situations where ethnocentrism and racism are very obvious.

**Susanne:** Officer Ryan pulled over colored women and men, even if they didn't do anything wrong. After Jean got her car stolen she wanted to change the locks in her house because she thought that colored people will break into her house.

**Kamilla:** when Jean talks about the lock person like she is better because she is white and rich. Officer Ryan stopped the car with Cameron and Christine. In the shop with the Iranian(?) man.

**Monika:** When Ryan called the lady about his father who is sick and when he heard her name he started to act racist.

**Nanna:** Situation with Christine and Cameron. Situation in the shop when Farhad tried to buy a gun and the person screams racist things at him and kick him out. Situation with Jean when she wanted to change the locks again because the guy has tattoos and looks criminal.

The questions in the second viewing guide are more complex and require learners to reflect further on what they have seen. Since this part of the film emphasises two characters, Anthony and Peter, the selected questions 3 and 4 concern themselves with their behavior and how the learners interpreted the behaviour. In question 3, the responses show how learners come to the conclusion that Jean was indeed afraid when she meets Anthony and Peter and



one response also points out that she reacted out of blind fear. In the oral discussion of the responses, learners appreciated that blind fear can occur in any situations that are unfamiliar and that this can happen under any circumstances. The ability to understand that this is not an uncommon phenomenon and bring preexisting knowledge in the analysis of such an event relates to the element skills (*savoir comprendre*) in the ICCM model. Here, learners demonstrate a capability to “identify relationships between documents from different countries” (Byram 1997, p. 37). In this case, the different countries are Norway and the USA.

The most interesting learner responses are documented in question 4. Here, some of the most attentive learners point out that Anthony and Peter seem to be prejudicial and racist because they believe people treat them differently because they are African-Americans. Lars points out that he had not seen anyone treat Anthony any differently and Marianne notes the hypocrisy: Anthony and Peter complain over being stereotyped as dangerous African-Americans, however they carry guns, threaten people and steal cars for a living.

Question 5 specifically asks learners to express their reaction to the racial incident between Cameron and Christine and Officer Ryan. Learners should be able to reflect on discrimination and racism and how this is expressed in the scene. All though none of the learners used the word “discrimination”, they do demonstrate the ability to recognise a discriminatory act. All learners expressed that Cameron and Christine were treated unfairly and they were terribly upset when Christine was sexually harassed by the police officer. Some of them even point out that the reason Cameron did not stand up for his wife was out of fear; since he belongs to a stigmatised group in the USA that has been treated unfairly by the justice system for centuries, he did not want to jeopardise his life. These responses relate to Byram’s (1997) component of having the knowledge (*savoirs*) about the reason for misunderstandings, as well as the causes, between people belonging to different cultural groups (p.51).

Notably, in the plenary discussion conducted after the second viewing session the learners who have pointed to the tensions between the judicial system in the USA and the African-American community expressed that they wrote this because they have seen films and read texts that showed the unjust treatment of African-Americans by police officers. The oral discussion connected to this particular viewing guide proved to be very salient as learners who had little knowledge about these issues listened with great interest. It also showed they were open to receiving new information about a topic they knew little about from their peers.

In essence, this is what the viewer response approach attempts to facilitate and it worked very well in this session.

### 5.4 The third viewing guide

#### Responses to discussion questions:

3. Is there a character in this film you sympathize with/do not sympathize with? Explain why.

**Mina:** I sympathize Peter's mother who lost him because he got shot by the officer Hanson. I sympathize everyone because I think they all just misunderstood each other because of the racism and discrimination and negative thinking.

**Linnea:** I feel very bad for Farhad because his store gets smashed up and people think hes a terrorist. But I actually sympathize with all of them because they all seem so scared and ignorant.

5. What social stereotypes do we see? How are we made to feel about them?

**Linnea:** black man: gangster. Big clothes, talks "ghetto". Rich man: descriminate other.

**Susanne:** We can see the gangsters, poor, rich, every kind of person that lives in a normal society. We are made to see them and just have our first impression of them are, but sooner in the film I changed my opinion on every single one.

**Nanna:** Anthony and Peter: dangerous criminals, angry, scary. Jean: rich woman who is racist. Farhad: Man from iran who dosent talk english. It adds a "real life feeling", because things that happens in the movie actually happens in real life.

**Marianne:** Jean has a housekeeper, and she looks Mexican = Housekeeper/nanny. Also, Anthony and Peter talk in a very specific accent (black accent?) and one place, Cameron is asked to tell the actor that he didn't speak "black enough". Anthony has big baggy clothes, a chain around his neck, sneakers and has braids. Film-makers want us to be skeptical against how people are shown and think like "is this really true".

**Hanna:** that all black people are criminals and that all white people are racistic which is not true.

6. Do you find the stereotypes in the film to be true?

**Nina:** I think a lot of people in the police are racist. I have also seen a lot of videos on facebook with dangerous black people. But I dont think all of them are true. not seen this in norway.

**Annette:** Maybe some parts of the movie are true. However I think some off the situations and people was a bit non realistic and a bit "over the top" from the real world and real situations.

**Kamilla:** It's a movie from Hollywood so I think no. But Peter and Anthony looks like they don't have a family or alot of money and they need to steal things to get money. (Jeg tror ikke de som har laget filmen bare har funnet opp dette og jeg tror de har fåt inspirasjon fra et sted).

7. What does the story of Officer Hanson tell us about racism and stereotyping?

**Lars:** That he didn't trust peter just because he is black that's a prejudice and that Hanson tought Peter was a stereotype black guy that robs and have a gun in his pocket. He liked black people in the beginning.

**Hedda:** That you do get affected of other people and the (miljøet). Hanson becomes racist but officer ryan is no longer racist by the end.

**Marianne:** Hanson is one of the heroes in the beginning. He doesn't like that Ryan is a jerk and a racist and helps Cameron when he gets pulled over (the 2<sup>nd</sup> time). But when he picks up Peter he seems very sceptic against him and he kills him because he was scared he had a gun. That was disappointing

because Hanson seemed like the most open-minded person. Maybe he actually had the same thoughts about black people all along, just like Ryan?

**Nora:** officer Hanson first seems like a “god cop” because he defends a black guy, but it ends with him shooting an innocent Peter that was reaching for his statue in his pocket. Hanson thought it was a pistol, so for defending himself he shot Peter, but I am sure if it was a white guy in the car it would have been totally different.

8. Do you think opinions, like for instance the ones of Officer Ryan, can be changed?

**Lars:** Of course can those kind of opinions change, and that depends very much on your environment and your social network.

**Susanne:** Yes, we just have to prove them wrong, show them the truth and everyone should not have so much prejudice of things/people. Ryan changes in the end and helps Christine.

**Marianne:** I think that once people get to know each other better and stop being racist and prejudiced, opinions can change. Many of the people change in the film, Ryan ends up rescuing Christine, Anthony sets the “chinkamen” free and Jean admits to being angry and scared all the time and gets comforted by her housekeeper.

**Henriette:** yes, I think Ryan should think even more through what kind of prejudice he has of black people. In the end he can see that the black ones are exactly like the white ones, except from the skin colour. Many people like that exist in the world, racist.

In the third viewing guide (appendix 6), learners responded quite extensively to the discussion questions. One reason for this might be that they took this viewing guide home, thus having more time to reflect on their answers. Question 3 essentially draws on the learners’ emotional sides. As the selected responses show, the learners are able to decentre and appreciate that one of the essential reasons why the characters seem to misunderstand and have prejudicial thoughts is because they know too little about each other. In Byram’s (1997) model, this refers to intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*) (p.34). Essentially, learners show a capability, and willingness, to look beyond the obvious issue and reflect on why there is so much uncertainty between the characters in the intercultural encounters.

Correspondingly, the responses in questions 7 and 8 show that learners have grasped the idea that prejudices, which eventually lead to racism, can be altered. As Houghton (2014) points out, prejudices are rooted in stereotypes and are always negative (p. 18). In *Crash*, we see that many of the characters change from being bigoted, narrow-minded and ignorant, to the very opposite. The exception is Officer Hanson who lets his fear take over and kills Peter after a misunderstanding, which question 7 refers to. This is also expressed in the responses and the ability to compare and contrast such attitudinal changes relates to the component regarding knowledge (*savoirs*) “of social processes” (Byram et al. 2002, p. 12). The latter element is demonstrated by Hedda in particular, who points out that Officer Hanson probably has been affected by his environment, and my interpretation of her response is that she refers to the cultural environment he has experienced in the LAPD. Officer Hanson has experienced

his colleagues being racist against African-American civilians and has also been ridiculed by his superior when addressing this matter. In connection to notions on culture, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) point out that the process of acquiring a culture happens gradually as individuals are exposed to different social environments and that is something that is continuously learned (p. 5-6).

Questions 5 asks the learners to identify some of the social stereotypes they see in the film and give their thoughts on how they feel about these, while question 6 calls for the learners to reflect on whether they find these stereotypes to be true. The weaker learners had difficulties with their comprehension and question 5 proved to be challenge for them. Thus they did not respond to this question. This is something I will pay more attention to when designing other viewing guides in the future. Two of the responses point to the African-American vernacular English in question 5 and find this as a very stereotypical characterisation of African-Americans. This is a cultural trait that is often depicted in films, and one learner even calls this variety “ghetto”, implying that it is somehow a negative cultural attribute. This particular learner has attempted to decentre, however the response also shows that the skill of modifying their attitudes in order to avoid stereotypical labels, such as “ghetto”, is something that needs to be further developed. Another response points to this same linguistic variety however; the learner in question lacks the proper vocabulary to express this. Regarding language as a cultural trait, William A. Haviland, Harald E. L. Prins and Bunny McBride stress that “[...] most words, how they are used, the meanings assigned, the grammar employed, and the syntax bear the identification marks of a specific culture” (as cited in Samovar et al, 2013, p. 40). These learners are able to distinguish cultural groups based on the spoken varieties, thus relating to the skill of interpreting this specific event and relating it to the issue at hand.

An interesting correlation to cultural and social issues in the Norwegian society came up during the plenary discussion connected to the second viewing guide; learners themselves came to the conclusion that a similar cultural trait exists in the Norwegian language. The stigmatising expression “kebabnorsk” (kebab-Norwegian) partly refers to new ways of speaking Norwegian, particularly among young people with a multicultural background in and around the Oslo area (Svendsen 2014, p. 33).

### **5.5 Worksheet 2: Reflective writing**

This task required learners to respond quite extensively to the following questions:

Write a short text (5-6 paragraphs) where you try to answer the questions below.

- How real do you feel the characters are? Could you imagine meeting some of the characters you saw in the film in in real life?
- Which character seemed the most racist at the beginning of the film? Were you able to identify with any of the characters?
- Who was your favourite character and least favourite character? Explain.
- What kind of stereotypes do we encounter in the film? Give examples.
- Have you ever been discriminated against because of your race, age, gender or anything else? Have you ever treated anyone differently because of their race, age, gender or anything else?
- How did the film characterize people from different ethnic groups? What did you learn about the different ethnic groups, based on the film?
- What moral lessons do the characters/ does the director teach us?

This is yet another writing activity thus learners practice their writing skills quite extensively in this project. Since these responses are longer and more complex, a selected amount of them can be found in appendix 7. The very first question asks learners to reflect on whether the characters seem realistic. The phrasing of the question could have been improved, because I wanted them to reflect on whether the issues we see in *Crash* can be transferrable to issues in the Norwegian society. Nonetheless, the responses show that they had no difficulties understanding the question. Some of the responses show that the learners find the characters to be realistic and that the types of issues we see in *Crash* are issues that indeed can be found in Norway as well, to some extent. Marianne even points out that many people post prejudicial comments on Facebook. Here, I assume she points to comments targeted at ethnic minorities. Learners who clearly see a parallel between issues in the USA and Norway demonstrate knowledge about the self and the other (savoirs) as well as the skill of discovering new information and relating it to one's own culture (savoir apprendre and savoir comprendre) (Byram, 1997, p. 34).

On the other hand, some of the other learners believe that the issues portrayed in *Crash* are over-exaggerated. They suggest that since Norway does not have as many ethnic minorities as the USA has, people tend to be more tolerant here. One can argue that these learners do not have sufficient factual knowledge about ethnic minorities in Norway and should have been given some more information prior to working with these discussion questions. They might base their responses on their experiences from their local environment, which might be more homogenous than other places in Norway.

### **5.6 Imaginative writing: My story**

The final data material consists of selected learner responses from the sixth activity "My story" where learners wrote a biographical text about one of the characters they had analysed in the worksheet "Reading films", task 4. They used the knowledge they had

gathered from watching the film and working with the discussion questions as a point of reference when writing these texts. A selection of learner's texts is found in appendix 8. The writing activity required them to work with the affective part of a learning process and also invited them to use their creativity.

On a general note, the responses I have selected to include in the analysis most definitely demonstrate that the learners have an ability to decentre and approach the questions with openness. All stories are very different and the learners present their individual interpretations of the different characters and their backgrounds. Not only is this a result of the transactional process, where they have connected with the film on a deeper level, it also demonstrates one of Byram's (1997) elements in the ICCM model. The skill of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) entails an ability to "identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins" (p. 61).

In the simplest terms, they have understood that most of these characters have ethnocentric attitudes which make it difficult for them to communicate and relate to other people they view as different from themselves. In their responses, the learners have reflected on how these ethnocentric and prejudicial thoughts have evolved and where they stem from. It is important that learners understand that there is a reason why people act and think in certain ways and they are able to empathise with people who are different from themselves. Some of the learners definitely demonstrate this skill in their responses.

## **6.0 Summary and conclusion**

### **6.1 Summary of findings**

The findings from the pre-watching activities primarily focused on stereotypes where the objective was to make learners reflect on the effects of stereotyping people, whether the stereotypes were negative or positive. The selected responses from the class activity generally show the discussion questions facilitated development of at least two important intercultural elements from Byram's (1997) model, namely *savoir être* and *savoir s'engager*. Activating learners' schemas connected to stereotypes and prejudice proved to be a good idea and I do believe that one of the reasons why learners found the activity to be interesting was because the worksheet invited them to share their own ideas and perceptions.

The three viewing guides greatly helped learners structure their impressions and thoughts, both through their written comments as well as the oral discussions conducted in class. This is a group of learners with very different backgrounds and some of them are also

better equipped at expressing themselves than other. There was never any guarantee that the learners would feel comfortable working with such complex concepts as we did in this intercultural film project. However, the selected responses illustrate that learners were most definitely able to work with at least four of Byram's (1997) elements in the ICCM model. The four elements I am referring to are *savoirs*, *savoir apprendre*, *savoir comprendre* and *savoir être*.

The responses to the activity activity "Reflective writing" proved that some learners are able to draw parallels between Norway and the USA and compare intercultural issues in these two countries, thus demonstrating intercultural skills such as *savoirs*, *savoir apprendre* and *savoir comprendre*. Other learners show that they still need more factual knowledge about multiculturalism in Norway. Furthermore, the task "Imaginative writing", allowed learners a chance to write longer texts. The responses to the task "Imaginative writing", in particular, focused on increasing their cultural sensitivity and learners show an ability to view the world from another person's perspective and demonstrate empathetic skills. In connection with Byram's (1997) intercultural skills, the element *savoir comprendre* is particularly demonstrated here.

## 6.2 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have investigated how the film *Crash* can be used in an EFL class at upper secondary level to promote intercultural learning. To answer my thesis question, "how can the film *Crash* be used to facilitate intercultural learning in EFL at upper secondary level?" I have conducted a qualitative case study research where all data material has been collected from 16 learners through several classroom activities. In the theoretical framework I have presented notions on culture, intercultural learning and communication. The National English Subject Curriculum and its reference to intercultural learning has been laid out, as well as the benefits of using films in educational settings. Additionally, relevant intercultural elements in *Crash* such as stereotypes and prejudice, cultural and racial identity and the power distance as a cultural trait have been discussed and supported by specific scenes from the film. All these ideas serve as a backdrop to the research study.

My research shows that implementing films for promoting and facilitating intercultural learning in the EFL classroom is a didactically appropriate method and the intercultural film project primarily focused on developing the five *savoirs* from Byram's (1997) ICCM model. More specifically, using the viewer response approach with the film *Crash*, combined with a variety of classroom activities, proves that it engages learners on a more personal and

affective level. One reason why the film project proved to be a success might be connected to the active participation that was required by the learners. Throughout the class project, they had to document their responses in writing, discuss these orally as well as be receptive to other interpretations and ideas from their classmates. This created a positive, safe and predictable learning environment which was particularly important since the concepts and conflicts presented in the film were quite complex.

English as a common core subject at upper vocational level does not only require learners to develop their linguistic skills and communicate appropriately according to the setting; it also requires learners to learn about other cultures and cultural traits. Furthermore, factual knowledge about other cultures and cultural traits is naturally important, however intercultural learning also emphasises the importance of reflecting on one's own values, attitudes, assumptions and perspectives which this intercultural project has focused on. When learners reflect on these aspects, on a personal level, they are also able to appreciate differing world views. In effect, this promotes respect and an appreciation of the differences between not only groups, but also individuals. The learners that participated in my research are all expected to enter a labour force that requires them to have excellent interpersonal skills. In the field of health care, they will encounter different types of patients whom they are obliged to offer their services to, thus the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately is crucial regardless whether this communication is in Norwegian or English. They are also expected to assess their own values and assumptions in connection to providing health care to patients and they should also demonstrate an ability to empathise with people who have different cultural and social backgrounds. The learners had already reflected on these aspects in their vocational courses which can be a reason why the intercultural film project proved to be successful with these particular learners. In the future, it would be interesting to examine whether learners from other vocational programmes would respond as positively to the classroom activities as the class I conducted this research study in. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyse the non-verbal communication portrayed in the film *Crash*.

Despite the fact that the didactic framework in this research study was designed for a specific vocational EFL class at upper secondary level, many of the activities can be used in other English classes when intercultural learning is on the agenda and I do believe other teachers might find them to be useful as well.



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Appendix 1 – Letter to the Headmaster

Emel Emiri

Louises gate 4B

0168 Oslo

17.01.2016

.....Videregående Skole

v/ Rektor: .....

### **Søknad om å få gjennomføre en kvalitativ forskningsstudie**

Jeg er nå kommet til det punktet der masteroppgaven skal skrives i studiet «Master i fremmedspråk i skolen». I den anledning har jeg valgt å skrive oppgave i temaet interkulturell læring og ønsker å gjennomføre et forskningsprosjekt der formålet er å undersøke hvordan film kan bli brukt til å fremme og/eller utvikle interkulturell kompetanse i engelskfaget. Forskningsprosjektet vil foregå våren 2016.

Det har blitt større fokus på å utvikle elevers interkulturelle kompetanse gjennom engelskfaget. Som fremmedspråklærer er det viktig at jeg skaper en fin balanse mellom lingvistik og pragmatikk. Elever må lære seg å bruke passende språk i ulike situasjoner og med ulike mennesker. En måte å lære dem dette på er å ta i bruk film, der jeg inviterer elevene til å vitne virkelighetsnære situasjoner og reflektere rundt språkbruk og holdninger omkring disse situasjonene.

Forskningsoppgaven er en videreføring av et pilotprosjekt som ble gjennomført i fjor og fokuserer på bruk av film i klasserommet der metoden, The Viewer-Response Approach, vil bli brukt for å belyse hvordan den kan fremme/utvikle interkulturell læring.

Prosjektet vil i utgangspunktet bli gjennomført i en HE klasse, men hvis jeg ser at jeg trenger mer data, ønsker jeg også gjennomføre dette på DH, enten Vg1 eller Vg2, avhengig av timeplaner og prøver. All undervisning som er relatert til forskningsprosjektet vil naturligvis være direkte knyttet til kompetansemålene i engelsk og vil ikke påvirke undervisning i andre fag.

Jeg vil utføre prosjektoppgaven med veiledning fra førsteamanuenser Eva Lambertsson Björk og Jutta Eschenbach ved Høgskolen i Østfold.

Jeg håper dere ser på dette som et interessant prosjekt som jeg kan få prøve ut blant noen av elevene på .....

Med vennlig hilsen

Emel Emiri

## Appendix 2 – Consent letter to learners

**Samtykkeerklæring til forskningsoppgave****Anonymisering av alle navn og tillatelse til å bruke data fra klasseromsaktiviteter**

Kjære elever og foreldre/foresatte.

Ved siden av arbeidet mitt som engelsklærer ved ..... så tar jeg også en mastergrad i engelsk didaktikk i programmet «Master i Fremmedspråk i skolen» ved Høgskolen i Østfold. Jeg er nå kommet til det viktige punktet der jeg skal skrive en masteroppgave. Temaet for oppgaven min er interkulturell læring og fokuset er å undersøke hvordan blant annet engelskspråklige filmer kan utvikle elevers interkulturelle kompetanse.

Oppgaven skal skrives på engelsk, derfor vil alle aktiviteter i denne forskningsoppgaven være knyttet til læreplanmålene for engelsk på videregående nivå og dine besvarelser skal også gjennomføres på engelsk.

Din identitet vil på ingen måte bli avslørt og fiktive navn vil bli brukt for å beskytte personvernet ditt. All data som samles inn vil ved semesterslutt bli slettet/kastet og kan heller ikke spores tilbake til deg. Jeg vil heller ikke oppgi klasse, skole eller by i oppgaven, men din etnisitet kan bli nevnt for å gi tilstrekkelig info om klassens oppbygging.

All aktivitet som foregår i klasserommet vil bli analysert for å forske på temaet oppgaven skrives i. Dette innebærer:

- Muntlige diskusjoner
- Skriftlige notater/besvarelser/tekster
- Logger

Hvis du som elev eller forelder/foresatt har noen spørsmål før du underskriver vil jeg veldig gjerne besvare disse. Send meg en mail på [emel.emiri@...vgs.no](mailto:emel.emiri@...vgs.no) eller kontakt meg på nr. 452 93 874. Hvis jeg ikke svarer på telefon på dagtid så har jeg sannsynligvis undervisning, men du vil bli oppringt så snart anledningen byr seg.

Ved å underskrive samtykker du til at dine besvarelser (både muntlige og skriftlige) kan bli analysert i lys av forskningsoppgaven og brukt i oppgaven. Hvis du på et eller annet punkt ikke lenger vil at jeg skal bruke dine analyser for å skrive mitt prosjekt, så har du mulighet til å trekke deg. Det er dog viktig å påpeke at alle oppgaver som skal karaktersettes må leveres for at du kan få vurdering på disse.

Underskrift av elev: \_\_\_\_\_ Dato: \_\_\_\_\_

Underskrift av foresatte: \_\_\_\_\_ Dato: \_\_\_\_\_




Underskrift av lærer: \_\_\_\_\_ Dato: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 3 - Pre-viewing activity

**STEREOTYPING**

**First impression of some characters in *Crash***

**Look at the pictures and write your impression of the characters, purely based on the pictures. You are not allowed to use profanity in your descriptions.**

<p><b>Rick</b></p> 	
<p><b>Jean</b></p> 	
<p><b>Anthony</b></p> 	
<p><b>Cameron</b></p>	





**Officer Ryan**

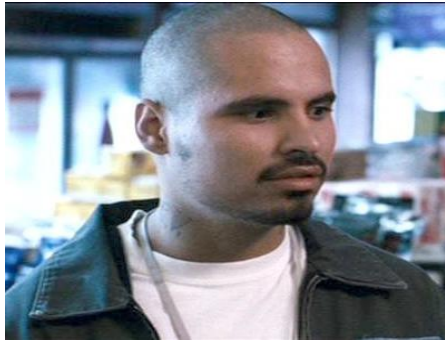


**Farhad**



**Shanequa**



**Daniel****Discussion questions:**

- 1) When you described these people, what did you focus on?
- 2) Do you think some of your descriptions are stereotypes?
- 3) Do you stereotype people?
- 4) Can stereotyping help us in some way?
- 5) Why do you think people stereotype?
- 6) How can stereotypes be damaging?
- 7) Do you think that it is a good idea to stereotype people?
- 8) How can being stereotyped hurt your job opportunities?
- 9) What the difference between stereotypes and prejudice?

Appendix 4 – The first viewing guide

**Crash: Viewing guide 1 (00:00:00-00:10:00)**

Remember these concepts: *racism, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice.*

**While watching the film:**

Make notes here of any interesting visual images you notice:

Make notes here about what you hear (music, sound effects, the way the characters speak):

**After viewing this part of the film:**

1. What do you learn about (any given character) so far?
2. What conflicts do you see developing?
3. What is the mood of the film so far?
4. What themes do you see emerging in the film?

## Appendix 5 – The second viewing guide

**Crash: Viewing guide 2 (00:10:00-00:36:50)**

Remember these concepts: *racism, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice.*

**While watching the film:**

Make notes here of any interesting visual images you notice:

Make notes here about what you hear (music, sound effects, the way the characters speak):

**After viewing this part of the film:**

1. How would you describe the mood of characters in the film? Do they seem happy/sad/confused/angry?
2. Why are Anthony and Peter so critical against white people?
3. Do you think Jean really was afraid of Anthony and Peter when she saw them on the street? Explain why you think this.
4. How do Anthony and Peter justify the way they act against white people?
5. Explain how you felt when Officer Ryan stops Cameron and Christine. Did they deserve to be treated that way? Why did they get pulled over?
6. Give examples of scenes/situations where ethnocentrism and racism are very obvious.

## Appendix 6 – The third viewing guide

**Crash: Viewing guide 3 (00:38:40-01:45:50)**

Remember these concepts: *racism, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice.*

**While watching the film:**

Make notes here of any interesting visual images you notice:

Make notes here about what you hear (music, sound effects, the way the characters speak):

**After viewing this part of the film:**

1. What did you laugh at while watching the film?
2. What shocked you the most?
3. Is there a character in this film you sympathize with/do not sympathize with? Explain why.
4. Why do you think the characters are so angry?
5. What social stereotypes do we see? How are we made to feel about them?
6. Do you find the stereotypes in the film to be true?
7. What does the story of Officer Hanson tell us about racism and stereotyping?
8. Do you think opinions, like for instance the ones of Officer Ryan, can be changed?
9. Did you like the movie? Why/why not?

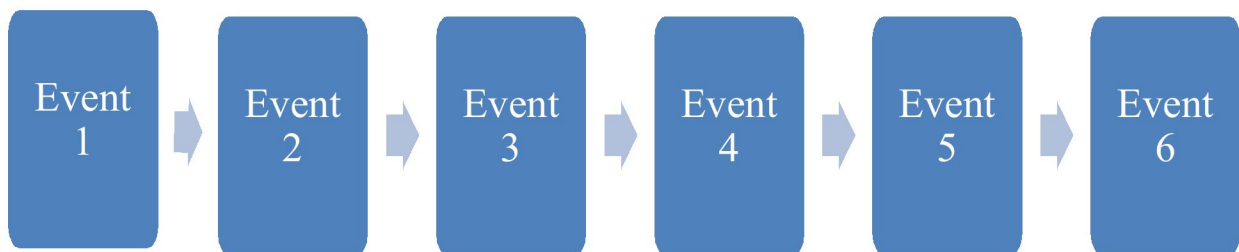
## Appendix 7 - Post-viewing activities

## READING FILMS

All your responses need to be uploaded on It's Learning by the end of the lessons.

### Step 1: Timeline<sup>6</sup>

After watching *Crash*, place the most important events in chronological order. When discussing these events in groups, remember to explain why you feel these events are important.



### Step 2: Reflective writing

Write a short text (4-5 paragraphs) answering the questions below.

- How real are the characters? Could you imagine meeting characters similar to some in the film in real life?
- In the film, Graham says: “In any real city, you walk, you brush past people, and people bump into you. In L.A, nobody touches you. We’re always behind this metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other just so we can feel something”. What do you think he means by this?
- How important is language and the words you choose when communicating with people?
- The film has received criticism for portraying people in a negative way. What are your thoughts on this?
- What kind of stereotypes do we encounter in the film? Give examples.
- What moral lessons does the characters/director teach us?

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from the teaching resource which was originally developed by T. Berg and uploaded on the Norwegian Digital Learning Arena (NDLA): <http://fyr.ndla.no/nb/teachingprogramme/8445#>

### Step 3: Character profile<sup>7</sup>

Choose two or three characters from the film and create their profile:

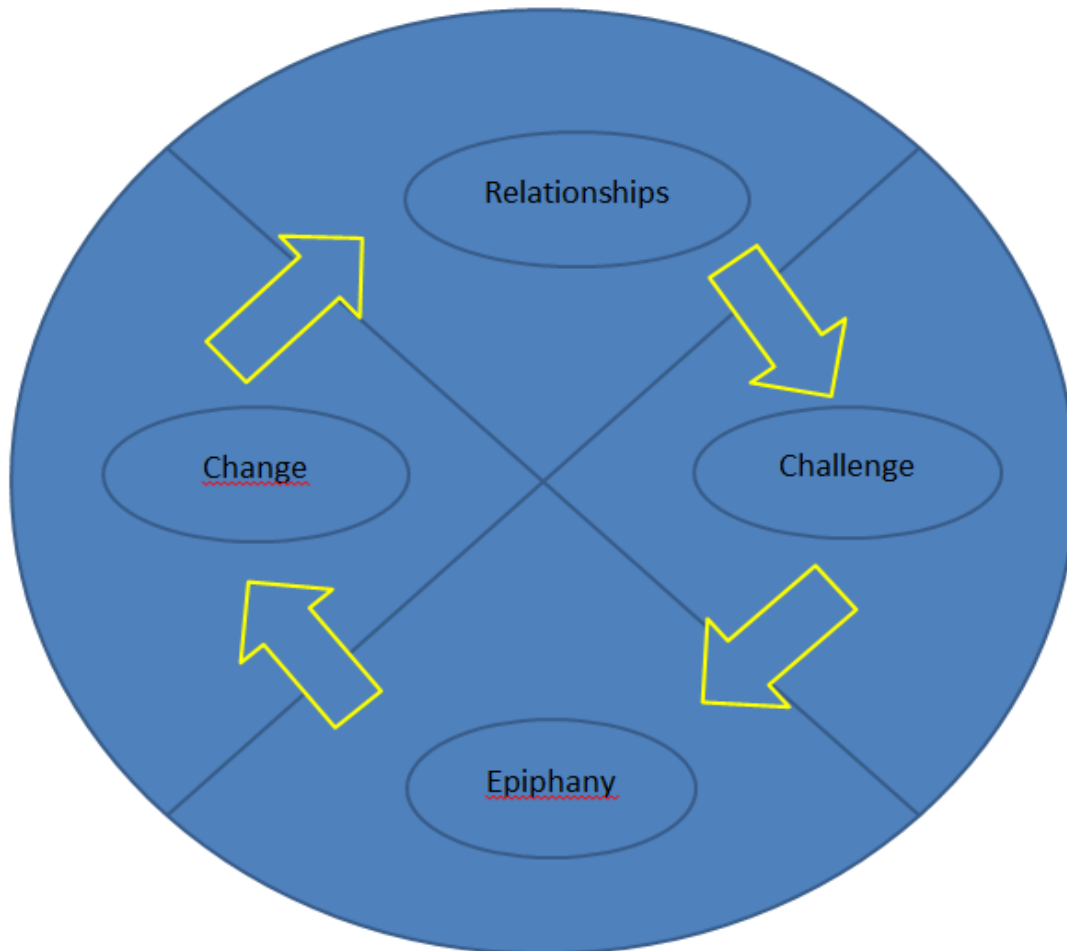
Name:	
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Interests/Hobbies:	
Skills:	
Friends / Interaction with other people	

Name:	
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Interests/Hobbies:	
Skills:	
Friends / Interaction with other people	

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from Norwegian Digital Learning Arena (NDLA) and originally developed by T. Berg:  
<http://fyr.ndla.no/nb/teachingprogramme/8506>

### Step 4: Character profile continued

Continue with the two characters you chose in the previous task and write a summary of them based on the model below. Start with “relationships” and end with “change”.





## Appendix 8 – Selected responses to worksheet 2: Reflective writing

**Annette:**

This movie is so real, the all characters seems to be real. I think at I would meet some of them in my life. We meet so many people throu a day so for sure we are gonna meet some of them. When we meet someone we have never met before, we starting to think how is she/he. What she/he likes, if she/he nice, what is his/her job, background etc. But we do not really know how they are. At the beginning of the film we see at seller don't want to sell the gun to iran man. He thinks at he's terrorist and he is going to kills someone.

After we have Jean who is scared of two black men. She's thinking at they are dangerous gangster. And I think at she is just like me. I mean, when I was in [the learners native country], I have never seen black men (maybe 10 in my whole lif), I have never see muslims e.t.s. I have never learn at school about other religion and culture so I had a lot of thoughts about them. When I came to Norway that was something normal. Here is so many nationalities, culture and religions at I started to see how people are for real.

Daniel is one of the characters I liked the most. He is a foreigner just like me. He doesn't impose his culture or language to other one but people still use stereotypes. They thinking at black men are dangerous and gangster, at muslims are terrorist e.t.c. But for the moment we don't know the man and we should not recognize/use stereotypes.

“Crash” is a movie, which shows and see everything about people. How we perceive people, what we thing about them, show at everyone is different. Sometimes we like it and sometimes not. Movie learnt at we should never judge a book by it's cover. You never know a person before you talk to them and hear their stories.

**Hedda:**

1. I think the characters are comparable to how it can be in reality. But I don't think that what happens in Norway is that extreme. We don't have so many nationalities, like Usa and I think we are more acceptance in Norway.
2. I think Jean and Anthony because they both had so many prejudices.
3. My favourite was Daniel because he is such a good father, and my least favourite is Anthony because he does so much bad, but gets away with everything.
4. Anthony's and Jeans meanings of each other colour.
5. Yes, I have been treated different because of my gender and age, and I have treated anyone different because of their gender. It happens all the time between boys and girls.
6. We can see how different the people live, hand how much they seems to earn. I learned that the ethnics groups are all racist to each and another.
7. To stop have prejudices to different culture, gender, age, colour and race

**Nina:**

I am sure there are many people that live in societys with many cultures but that have hard times. So yes, I think that many people like the characters in “Crash” exist in real life.

I think that the one who seemed the most racist was Officer Ryan. One of the many situations where he is racist is, when he tells the health care worker that white people should have got her job instead of her. Another time when he is racist is, when he pulls over innocent black coloured women and a man. I do not think that I identify any of the characters, because I am not racist and I do not see myself in any of the other characters either. But I do think that I can relate to sometimes being sceptic because I do not know the other person and so I make up ideas.

My favourite character was Anthony, because the reasons of why he got angry over white people was funny. The other reason why he is my favourite is that he ended up helping Asians from being sold as slaves. My least favourite character is Farhad, because he got mad over things that he should not get mad over. He even tried to kill Daniel, even when the reason why his shop got mugged was because of himself.

There is many stereotypes in the film. Anthony is very stereotype in the movie; he meant that every single white person is racist and hated him or her. Jean was a stereotype too, because she meant that black coloured people will mug her house. They are both judging a race because of some group of that race did something bad.

I have been discriminated against, because I am a Muslim. Sometimes in the bus or in a train, when there is available seat, some people looks at the seat and on me, but chose to stand instead. However, I never treated someone different because of his or her skin colour or anything else, but I stereotype sometimes, I guess. I learned that you should not judge someone because of their race, believe, colour or anything else. Because in the end, we are all alike and maybe that the one you do not like, ends up being the one who cares about you the most.

### Mina:

- In the film, we saw several characters who had different thought about each other. The characters in the film really did a good job about showing racism and discrimination. Those things are something we still can imagine in these days, but it's rare that people show it so clear like in the film. I don't know if I can imagine meeting some of the characters I saw in the film in real life because they really overreacted about stereotype and discriminations. Those are not something we see in daily now.

- Anthony and Peter seemed the most racist at the beginning of the film because they argue over racial stereotyping of white people. I won't imagine to be one of those characters because I don't judge people by their colour or are racist.

- My favourite character was Daniel because he was a good father for his daughter and he is most innocent. He shows a good example for his daughter by supporting her. I didn't like Anthony because he over thinking about white people. He use stereotype and think that all white people are racism when there are many good white people who aren't racism.

- It was judging, suppress, the way they talk against white and black people, and how they look like. Some kind of stereotypes was when Jean was in a situation where two black boys stole her car. After that, she meant that all black people are the same and will do the same bad things.

- I have been discriminated once when I went at primary school. Because I'm brown and had another culture and language. However, we all were child so I don't think they really meant to discriminate me. I don't think I have treated anyone differently just because of their race, age or gender.

- The director and the characters taught us about racial stereotyping, and this could happen nowadays.

### Linnea:

I think I could meet someone like all of them. But i don't think that I will meet them here in Norway, maybe in the USA. Exept from Jean because many of the old ladis here in Norway which are quit racist sometimes. The reason i think it's more realistic to meet a character from the film in the USA is because Norway is a small country and there is not so much racist environment here. But in USA it's big and many nationalities and we know there is a lot of crime, racism there.

I actually think all of them are racist and prejudice (not Peter's mom). Well, I'm afraid that I am a bit like Jean. I don't get scared if two black people are going pas me on the street but if they robed the car and pointed a gun at my face i would probliby get anxious for a couple of days.

My favourite character is Daniel, his so sweet. Hi dosen't changes his personality. His so strong against all the mean people, and hi takes good care of his daughter. My least favorite character are Offiser Hanson. He was so clever in the beginning, and then he got very racist and so he killed Peter because he thought hi was going to take a gun from his pocket.

I have kinda been discriminated against, but not somthing big. But yeah like oh you week because youre a girl or you to young for this and about my hight.

The rich one = they think they are better than other people and discriminate them

The people from Iran : they tried to fit in

The police: racist

The gangstha = black people, lost anger, negative

The moral lessons is that we shouldn't thinking negative about a another people even if they are different.

**Henriette:**

I think we surround us whit all of the kinds of characters in the film. Everyone is dealing whit something we don't know of. Every single person have a history and nobody is the same.

In the beginning I thout Jean Cabot was the most racist because she didnt like that it was Daniel that exchange her doorlock. The one I can identify whit would be Christine. If I was her I would have act just the same way she did with the police.

I have strong opinions and fellings about abuse. So I liked Christine the best. She is a women whit tough nail and are not affrayd of speaking her mind. The person I wasn't a big fan of would be Jane (and Ryan). She was very negative and wasn't a big fan of other people with colour.

I have been discriminated before but I have never thout of it as discrimination. I have been discriminated because I am a girl. But I don't think it is that bad as if I had another skin colour. I think that sinse we live in a multicultural society people should be open to other people. But where I live there are not many multicultural people and we don't have many at school heller. I don't think I have treated anyone different. If I have, it was not the meaning and I am sorry if I did.

**Marianne:**

The characters are believable, but maybe too over the top. I think there are many people who have prejudice and are racists all over the world, even in Norway. Maybe people don't express this out loud but on Facebook, for instance, there are many nasty comments coming from Norwegians. I think sometimes we imagine that we are better than other's without having any reason for thinking like that.

I don't think any of them were "more racist than the other". All of them discriminated and pre-judged, but Ryan was the one who was the most open about it. He said it to their faces. While Jean didn't say it directly to Daniel but he heard it. Anthony is also extremely racist, even though he's black.

I can't identify with being racist, but I can identify with being scared or sceptic against others without knowing them. But I would never go up to someone and say "hey, I don't know you and you seem shady so I'm not gonna get to know you".

Some of the stereotypes we see in the film are the rich white people who have a maid, the criminal black "gangbangers" who threaten people, that all muslims are terrorists (Farhad). The police is also shown in a negative way: Ryan who is racist and also their boss who turns the blind eye and also that they are corrupt.

I sometimes feel discriminated, or treated different because I'm a girl. If I get upset or something, some boys might say "Are you on your period??" Other than that I don't think so, but I have a typical "Norwegian" look so maybe people aren't that sceptical of me? When I talk with my grandmother, I treat her "different" because she's old and doesn't really get all the things I'm interested in or the way I dress, but I don't know if that counts.

## Appendix 9 – Selected responses to activity six

**Imaginative writing: My story****Henriette:**

Hallo, my name is Daniel Ruiz and this is my story.

My parents came to Los Angeles ten years before I was born because my mother was pregnant with my big brother Luca. They moved because they thought he would get a better childhood here than in Mexico. My father and my mother came here legal, but many people thought they were illegal immigrants. Therefore, they got a lot of hate. They both had hard times trying to find job because of their background and because of their bad English. My father was a house builder and my mother was a house cleaner. She worked as a teacher in Mexico, but she did not get jobs there because of bad English skills.

We lived in an okay neighbourhood. My parents had a hard time finding a place to live. Not because of the money they had, but because of their background. The house was not big and only had one floor. We had one bathroom, a tiny Livingroom with open kitchen design, three bedrooms and a big garden.

My mother loved to grow fruit and vegetables in our garden and I remember stealing her strawberries. I loved her strawberries. I think she knew that I took them, but she did not care. She always said that the fruit and vegetables that grew in the garden was for everyone. No matter who you were. Maybe it had a bigger message than only fruit and vegetables, but I was only a kid so I did not think about it.

I have two older siblings. Luca which is ten years older than me, and Margo which is five years older than me. I shared room with my brother which was okay because we were very good friends. He told me everything I know today.

Luca was a very nice person until he started senior high school. He totally changed! I was six years old and he was sixteen. From the way he talked and to the way he walked. He started sagging his pants and wore big hoodies. He could disappear and not come home in weeks. My parents became very worried and tried to talk to him, but he totally ignored them. He told them to “fuck off” and then he just left. My parent tried to call the cops, but they said that they could not do anything about it. Then my mother got angry and started screaming to them. The police officer got angrier and told her to shut up. I remember the anger she had in her eyes. I never seen her so angry before. I knew she was sad to, but she did not cry. She never cried.

He told me what he did when he came home again. He told me how to get up locks in people’s houses and how to steal from their pockets. I did not tell parents because I did not want my brother to hate me to. He told me why he did this and the answer was always “because of stereotyping and it’s a big chance you will do it to”. I did not understand what he meant before I got a little bit older.

Two years later. Five days before Lucas eighteenth birthday a tragedy happened. His friend came running in through our door and in to the Livingroom where we were eating our dinner. “They shoot him,” he said. His eyes looked sad and his skin was pale. My mother lost the ability to move and my father went to find Luca. He came home five hours later with blood all over his clothes.

I remember how quiet our house was that day. Usually it is a lot of noise in the neighbourhood, but today the mood was sad and down. No kids were playing. Everybody knew about the tragedy. Luca was good to our neighbours and he meant a lot to some of them.

I did not sleep that night. Our bedroom felt bigger and I always had the feeling of missing something. I could hear my parents talk in their bedroom. It was next to ours. They talked in Spanish. I knew a little bit Spanish, but not enough to understand what they were saying. I could hear my mother cry. I never heard my mother cry before and it felt terrible. I slept in my sister’s bed that night. She was a little rebel to. She had cut her hair short and wore crop tops all the time. She was nice though.

She was bullied a lot because she was Mexican. Some boys even pawed her. She became depressed after Lucas death. She started to wear dark eyeshadow and red lipstick. I think my parents became depressed too. They changed their behaviour and did not care anymore.

When she was fourteen she run away. Everyone was looking after her. My parent was scared she was dead just like my brother. They forgot to eat and I had to be the boss of the house for a while. I bought food, cleaned the

house and took care of my mother's garden. My mother quite her job and my father travelled through whole US to find her, but he came home without her.

From that day, I decided to never disappoint my parents because I knew how it affected them. I would never steal, never run away and never go against them. I also decided to become a locks man that day because I wanted to help people be safe. Since my brother told me how they did it, I toughed I could make it harder to them.

One night I heard noises. It sounded like footsteps. It came from Margo's bedroom! I went to check. It was Margo! "Don't tell mom and dad", she said while packing her bag. She looked so old. Her hair had started to grow long. I did not say anything. I just gave her a hug, which lasted forever. I started crying and I think she cried to. "I have something to you", she said. "It's an invisible cape", she continued and tied it around my neck. "It will keep you safe", she told me. "I got it from a fairy and now I will give it to you", she hugged me and left through the window.

It was a truck waiting on her. "I'm in Mexico", she screamed through the car window and left.

When I was eighteen, I found the love of my life. She is perfect and I love her. We decided to get married two years later in Mexico where I also tried to find Margo. It was hard. I asked everyone if someone knew a woman named Margo Ruiz. I looked close to the border between Mexico and US and the place my parents come from. I think I found her walking with two young children. It looked like her and her children reminded me of her when she was younger. I did not stop her though. She looked happy and I did not want to scare her kids. It was a girl and a boy. My wife and I lived with my parents until the day they died. They died young. First my father and some months later my mother.

The same day my mother died, we found out that we were going to become parents. 4th September 1999 we got our daughter Lara. I worked as a locks man and my wife was a nurse. When Lara was four we moved to a better neighbourhood and lived almost happy ever after.

### **Marianne:**

Hi my name is Jean and I am going to tell you why I am like I am. I am going to start with when I was a child I didn't have any siblings and not that many friends. My father had a lot of money, because he worked all the time and was always on business trips. My mom didn't work but her whole life was all about her girlfriends and everything that could make our family look better. I remember from my childhood that where I lived there were no black people, if I did see someone that had dark skin I was not allowed to talk to them or even to go near them. Back then there was always something in the newspaper about some black person or with an different ethnic background that was negative might have been that they killed someone or a robbery.

I pretty much grew up being told that people with different ethnic backgrounds aren't worth as much as me or deserve the same as me and even that we shouldn't trust them. My dad got robbed once by two black boys and was beaten up very badly. I think that may have affected his opinions.

When I got older I started to get my own meanings about people and didn't want to listen to my family about what they thought about people with different ethnic backgrounds. So I started to hang with people in school I knew had a bad reputation and that came from other places around the world. In the beginning I had so much fun and we did some things that were a little crazy but nothing too bad. After a while the guys started doing drugs and selling drugs which I didn't really want to get in with. So I said that but they just laughed and said I was a rich kid who wanted her daddy to be proud and so on. I remember that that pissed me off and I wanted to prove them wrong so I started selling drugs. After a while I was caught selling and I got so much trouble that I was sent to a all girls school. After this episode I got really sceptic myself because I thought these people were my friends, but they treated me poorly.

From that day forward I have been very skeptic but never treated people badly. I didn't work with a girl from irk once and I remember she telling me all these stories of people doing bad things to her and her family for no reason just because she was from a different place. And she was the only friend I ever had since that incident that was not with and with the same ethnic background as me. I think one big reason I am as I am today is because of how I was raised. My parents taught me that people with a different ethnic background than us or even if they are black that they are not as important not as smart not as trustworthy and so on. So after a while I started to believe that and I started to act the way they used to act to everyone around us I was.

But at the same time I don't think it is my entire parents fault, because our community and society all are very racist even more when I was young but still now. So every day you get told to be a racist and if you aren't you will get looked down on and not respected anymore. So I blame my parents but it's as much the community's fault as it is my parents fault. I always lived in a white neighborhood but I didn't have many friends. When I was

a child I wasn't allowed to hang out with kids who had a different ethnic background. I think something positive about my childhood and my parents would be that they told me about all the bad in the world and they thought me to be tough and to be skeptic to who I meet and who I am talking too. I also think that now I see how I'm not going to raise my future children because I wouldn't want them to treat someone in a different way than what they would want to be treated. I don't want to be awful and mean to people, but sometimes I can't control it. If I think about it, I wouldn't want to be treated different just because I'm white and rich....

**Lars:**

I've never felt like I'm at home in America. Everybody calls us terrorists and my store has been smashed so many times I've lost the counting. My life in Iran wasn't easy and there was a reason for why I moved my whole family across the world. My parents are dead, my sister and brother are dead, they are all dead because of the god damn war. Dad owned a store in Tehran and I grew up helping him there. He was a locksmith. The store was his pride and joy and I loved being there with him. Our apartment was right over the store so even though my dad worked all day he was never far away.

I was raised with strict Iranian rules and had to work hard to do good in school. After school I would do my homework in dad's store just so that I could be with him. He told me a lot about the history of my homeland and how important it was for me to never forget where I come from.

I will never forget the day my family died. At that time I was studying in Tehran to become an engineer. My uncle called me and told me that a bomb hit our home and that nobody survived it. Thank god my brother was at work and wasn't hit but when we went back to see the place it was nothing left but piles of stones. We decided to move to America because a lot of people did this, but I was engaged and couldn't leave her in Iran so we took my wife with me.

Years passed and things were hard, but we got enough money to open a small store with Iranian food. My shop goes well but it has been smashed so many times that I lost count. . People tell me to give up the store but I'll never give it up because it's the only thing that still reminds me of home. Every time I have to spend my money to fix it. Everything got worse after 9/11 and now my family and me will always be seen as terrorist. In Iran, I escaped a war. But now I am in America I fight a very different war. And that makes me so angry all the time