

“What Do I or Other People Do Differently?”

ESL Students’ Perceptions of Intercultural Competence

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It was a dream of mine to become an English teacher. I have always loved the English language and always wanted to learn and discover more. And, so I did. What I did not know though, was that I one day would meet multicultural students that would change my orbit, and it was an awakening - this is what I was meant to do. Teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students is very inspiring and something I warmly recommend. Writing this master thesis on intercultural competence, incorporating what I like doing the most, has been very rewarding and I am so proud of having accomplished it! On that note I would like to end by saying a few words about education by quoting Neuner (2012, p. 11): “Education needs a vision. It must inspire people’s minds, stir their emotions and lend wings to their actions.” So, let intercultural competence be that vision that permeates teaching and lends young people wings.

Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savour their songs.

Nelson Mandela

Abstract

This master thesis explores to what extent explicit essay writing may promote students' intercultural competence in the English as a second language classroom. What themes that are interesting for students to write about, and how a self-assessment may be modelled based on students' writing, are also of interest. 23 students, 16 – 19 years old, with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, participated in the investigation. Their essays were closely analysed and compared to a similar project; the Bergen 'Can Do' project (Hasselgreen, 2003). The findings indicate that essay writing on themes that students are familiar with is an excellent starting point for promoting intercultural competence in the English as a second language classroom. Further, a self-assessment tool based on the English Language Portfolio (Council of Europe, 2011) and the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (Byram et al., 2009) may support students to develop their intercultural competence, as well as enhance their language skills. It is suggested that the survey can be expanded in that studies of teachers' perceptions of promoting IC may be of interest for future research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

For many years now, Sweden has experienced a vast inflow of immigrants; mostly refugees and, among them, a huge number of unaccompanied children. This has entailed a change in society at large; it has become more multicultural. Obviously, such a societal change leads to an increased cultural and ethnic diversity in school. School has become a meeting place for students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Undoubtedly, not without educational hurdles along the way. New educational challenges appear in the multicultural classroom, and they affect both teachers and students.

Approaching cultural diversity may be a challenge for students and teachers in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom. Intolerance and marginalisation could increase, and these are problems which are not easily resolved (Byram, 1997). Intercultural competence (IC) is therefore increasingly important in the teaching of English as a second language in Sweden. The promotion and assessment of IC in the ESL classroom may enable students to develop a critical cultural awareness where understanding and empathy form the basis for collaboration and learning. A more positive and supportive environment may be created, where it becomes easier to cooperate and in which all students can reach their full potential and achieve their goals. This approach, in turn, focuses on lifelong learning, and is compatible with the Swedish Education Act and its presentation of the fundamental values, which school is to communicate and pass on in order for students to develop in their future careers (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011).

In a not too distant future, students will meet a labour market where IC is a prerequisite in that the labour force has become more culturally diverse. Consequently, students need to learn to step outside their own frame of reference to be able to cooperate successfully. Having knowledge of IC and being able to handle and apply it in their working life strengthens students' future job employability. Against this background, helping students develop the skills needed for becoming interculturally competent is vital. This master thesis aims at establishing how a group of teenaged students perceive IC in their daily lives in view of the multicultural future they are about to face.

In the spring of 2018, I conducted a study regarding IC based on a research project from 2001, the Bergen 'Can Do' Project (Hasselgreen, 2003). In the Bergen 'Can Do' Project, IC formed the basis for investigating what was most interesting to 40 students from various countries regarding IC, and in what way IC may be assessed in the classroom by the teachers,

as well as by the students themselves. In my own research project, The Burgården ‘Can Do’ Project (van Manen, 2018), the aim was to investigate what IC meant to 15 upper secondary students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Parts of the Bergen project were replicated, and students were asked to write essays in which they discussed what was most interesting to them about IC. These essays were thereafter compared to the result from the Bergen ‘Can Do’ Project. However, in the Bergen project an assessment of students’ IC was also constructed. The intention of this master thesis is to supplement the research project of 2018 (van Manen) on the understanding, knowledge and insight of IC in the ESL classroom, with an assessment like the one in the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project. Hence, in this present study, the aim is to replicate the study executed in 2018, and also construct an assessment, which will bring in a new dimension to my own work (van Manen, 2018), resulting in a complete replication of the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project, but in another time and with other participants. In so doing, Michael Byram’s model for IC (1997) and its methods and practices for developing the assessment of IC form the theoretical basis for this master thesis.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this master thesis is to investigate to what extent specific essay writing may promote intercultural competence in the ESL classroom. The result given will be analysed and compared to the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project (Hasselgreen, 2003). The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What themes does a multicultural class find important when it comes to promoting intercultural competence in the ESL classroom?
2. How may these themes be used for developing self-assessment forms for ESL students?
3. What practical implications for the ESL classroom may there be in promoting intercultural competence?

1.3 Overview of Study

First, some key terms will be presented and defined in that they are relevant to IC and therefore used repeatedly in this master thesis. After this follows a presentation of the concepts of IC. A description of how IC may be promoted and assessed in the ESL classroom comes next. An overview will then be given of what the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School expresses about culture and critical cultural awareness (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Then follows a presentation of the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project (Hasselgreen, 2003). The ensuing chapter will present the method, the material and present the result, which will be analysed and compared to the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project (ibid.). Finally, a summary and a conclusion will complete this master thesis.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In sub-chapter 2.1 definitions are given of key terms regarding IC. Sub-chapter 2.2 describes the concepts of IC. Sub-chapter 2.3 gives an overview of how IC may be promoted in the ESL classroom. Sub-chapter 2.4 gives an overview of how IC may be assessed in the ESL classroom. Sub-chapter 2.5 describes how the concepts of culture and critical cultural awareness are discussed in the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Sub-chapter 2.6 presents the Bergen ‘Can Do’ Project (Hasselgreen, 2003).

2.1 Definitions of Key Terms

Before a closer examination takes place of what constitutes the very concepts of IC, the key terms *identity*, *culture*, *intercultural encounters*, *critical cultural awareness*, *intercultural education*, and *competence* will be defined as they occur throughout this master thesis.

2.1.1 Identity

The term *identity* symbolises one’s perception of who one is, and this perception is exclusive for each and every one of us (Huber et al., 2014, p. 13). Our identities may vary depending on the context we are in, and with whom, since we express ourselves differently in different situations. However, our identities may also be assigned to us by other people, who view us in a certain way, based on our ethnic background or based on our sex (ibid., p.15).

Our identities are both personal and social. On the one hand, *identity* is regarded as personal in that it mirrors our characters; for example, whether we are considerate, introverted or maybe stubborn (ibid., p. 13). *Identity* is also personal in the relationships we consider ourselves to be part of, i.e., if we consider ourselves being someone’s sister, teacher, wife or neighbour. On the other hand, *identity* is regarded as social when we interact within a group with which we share the same interests, in which we feel united with the members and where we consider ourselves to share the same values (ibid.). Such a group may be a church group, an art group, a sports club or if we choose to participate in voluntary work, for example. All together, our identities are composed of learned characteristics affected by the culture in which we have grown up, and by everything we have experienced in our lives. But our identities are also composed of our DNA, which is transferred from one generation to another

(Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 7). Building on all the above-mentioned relationships in different constellations is in the end what makes our identities one-of-a-kind.

2.1.2 Culture

The concept of *culture* has an array of different definitions and is in this sense not easy to define. Piller (2017, p. 29) argues that the different interpretations of the concept of *culture* vary depending on how the notion of *culture* is understood in different academic fields. In her argumentation, Piller (ibid., p. 16) points to the heredity of the very word and explains that the concept of *culture* stems from colonisation. During the colonisation of the world, in which some states regarded themselves superior to others, perceptions as stereotypes, inequality and supremacy arose. In the light of this, the concept of *culture* may signify an idea more rooted in the Western part of the world: an idea of a social stratum where people are categorized in different groups depending on a variety of perceived inequalities among those groups.

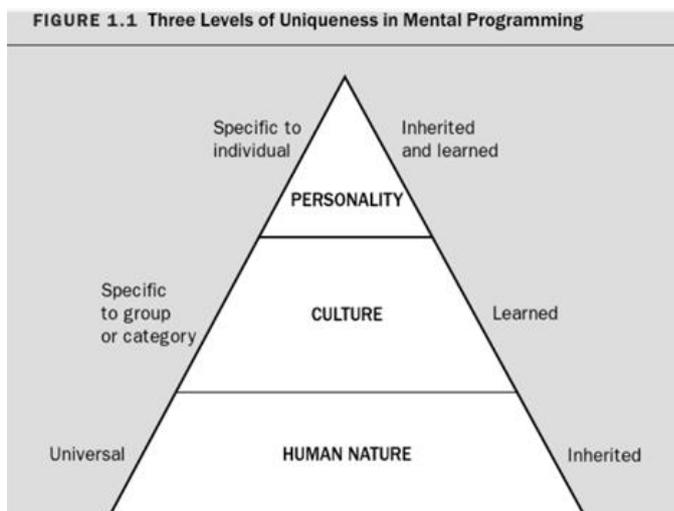
However, according to Huber et al. (2014), the concept of *culture* may be divided into the three following aspects: “material, social and subjective aspects of culture [...] used by members of a cultural group” (pp. 13-14). Regarding the material aspects of *culture*, these may for example include concrete products such as clothes, food and utensils. The social aspects of *culture* may include religious organisations and educational institutions, as well as explicit or implicitly understood regulations or principles regarding how to behave within a particular activity or sphere. As to the subjective aspects of *culture*, these may include what one believes in, one’s attitude towards someone or something, and, for example, a shared set of criteria or stated values in relation to which judgements can be made. Consequently, *culture* is a fusion of means used in a way that is appropriate for the individual or for the group and this is determined individually or within a group constellation based on the context. Furthermore, people may be members of different cultural groups at the same time, depending on what they associate or sympathise with. The three different aspects of the concept of *culture*; the material, social and subjective aspects, are often challenged within the cultural groups. This conduct may create fluctuations of the rules and what they consist of, and result in them becoming vague (ibid.).

The above description of what the concept of *culture* constitutes corresponds to Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 6), who explain *culture* as a joint experience. However, Hofstede et al. (ibid.) also add further explanations which now will be accounted for. The concept of *culture* is not an inherited human feature, but it is learned and imprinted in us in the milieu

that surrounds us from our very childhood and continuously throughout our lives. Consequently, the concept of *culture* involves people’s experiences and these experiences are neither voiced nor written down but occur as a result of different procedures. These procedures are understood and acted on, based on various presumptions that may be taken for granted. As illustrated in *Figure 1*, Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 6) state that *culture*, together with our identities and the very human nature, creates our minds and forms our thoughts, feelings as well as our actions in life and all together make us humans unique. Accordingly, there are three different levels that together constitute human uniqueness: *identity*, *culture* and *human nature*.

Human nature is what unites us humans in that we share a set of inherited traits that make us work in particular ways. We have the capacity to feel emotions, we are social beings in need of other human beings, and we are able to discuss what is on our minds. As to the emotions, Hofstede et al. (ibid.) emphasize that culture controls the way we choose to display them. In this sense *culture* is, as mentioned above, a learned and not an innate phenomenon.

Figure 1. *Three levels of uniqueness in mental programming*



(Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 6)

As can be seen in *Figure 1*, *culture* is something we participate in together with a group or category of people that we associate with and/or to which we feel we belong. What is regarded as different between cultures is displayed by one’s acts or appearances when it comes to “symbols, heroes, rituals, and values” (ibid., 2010, p. 7). Symbols comprise, for example, how we talk and what words we use, what clothes we prefer to put on and how we style our hair. These symbols are often influenced by other cultures and therefore easily interchangeable. However, symbols also convey conceptions or issues that may only be

understood by members of that specific *culture*. As to heroes, this category comprises people who are held in high esteem, i.e., who are well respected and admired by a *culture*. A hero could also be a parent who is perceived as a role model. Concerning rituals, these are regarded as very important in a *culture* in that they make people bond and bring together society. Some examples of rituals may be how people greet each other, what festivities we celebrate and how, or the commemorations we hold in society.

The very essence of a *culture* is its values, our moral principles. Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 9) claim that these principles are learned at an early age. Unconsciously and early on, we take after certain unwritten rules, and we learn about what to do and what not to do, what is right and what is wrong, and how to behave or how not to behave. We absorb certain actions and perceptions and replicate them without really knowing why we perceive or sense that this is the way it ought to be done. According to Hofstede et al. (ibid., p. 13), it is the very values of life that construct but also bring forward *culture*. However, it is also the very values that people with different cultural backgrounds disagree on and have different conceptions of, and that sometimes cause concerns. Concern may be caused in the sense that members of cultural groups may restrict the way they themselves or other people should think and act (Huber et al., 2014, p. 15).

2.1.3 Intercultural Encounters

The concept of *intercultural encounters* is defined as a meeting between two people, or a meeting within a group, where both parties regard each other to have different cultural patterns (ibid., p. 16). *Intercultural encounters* can either take place in real life situations or online, where parties from different countries participate or where parties with different views on, for example, ethnicity or religion participate. The people involved may speak the same language and they may not. In such *intercultural encounters*, participants are diverse, i.e., their beliefs, values and attitudes differ. Huber et al. (ibid.) emphasize that it is vital for the participants to exercise IC for the *intercultural encounters* to have a successful outcome.

2.1.4 Critical Cultural Awareness

The concept of *critical cultural awareness* is defined as “[a]n 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. 53). To be interculturally aware involves addressing the perceived differences in attitudes, beliefs and values within others as well as in

oneself, and requires that one continues to engage with interest on equal terms, disregarding scepticisms and respecting each other's different perspectives (Byram, 1997, pp. 57-58).

2.1.5 Intercultural Education

The term intercultural education is based on a political approach in which democratic values and critical cultural awareness are to permeate teacher training, the school curriculum and classroom pedagogy (Neuner, 2012, p. 12). The need for an intercultural education has emerged due to demographic changes in which society has become more diverse (ibid., p. 13). It is the concern of possible discrimination and exclusion among students of different ethnicities that brings forward intercultural education.

2.1.6 Competence

The concept of *competence* is defined as being able to interact with positive results in different sociocultural environments (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, pp. 6 -7). To be able to adapt to new situations that one may find oneself in, aiming for a positive outcome, includes having the know-how that is needed in order to interpret, understand, act and speak appropriately in a culturally or linguistically new context. In regard to the teaching of IC, the term *competence* is more specifically defined and is thought to include “a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action in [...] [i]ntercultural encounters" and is thereby to be used in overcoming any possible obstacles in communication (Huber et al., 2014, p. 16). All in all, the above-mentioned definitions of the different concepts comply well with Byram’s model of IC (1997) on which this thesis now will draw.

2.2 The Concepts of IC

IC encompasses having the abilities needed to learn to understand, approach and deal with different controversies and misunderstandings that may appear in a multicultural society in which people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds coexist. The abilities involved in this process are developed by Byram (1997) and consist of different components, also called ‘savoirs’, which are displayed in *Figure 2*. The components ‘attitudes’, ‘knowledge’ ‘skills’ and ‘education/critical cultural awareness’ (ibid., p. 34), are interconnected and the teaching of them is thought to facilitate and develop students’ IC. In so doing, Byram (1997, p. 49) emphasizes that his model is first and foremost concerned with

the actual ‘savoirs’ rather than linguistic developments. The components will now be explained in more detail in their connection to IC.

Figure 2. Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997, p.34)

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

The *attitudes* component focuses on how students develop interculturally when perceiving, interpreting and acting around people with cultural affiliations other than their own (Byram, 1997, p. 34). *Attitudes* encompasses the ability to put the perceived differences in a wider perspective and being receptive instead of assessing, judging and distancing oneself without being able to interact in a constructive manner. For example, when meeting someone from another linguistic or cultural background, students may assess and associate certain attributes to him or her, depending on how they perceive his or her beliefs and conducts. Likewise, depending on the nationality of the person in question, students can also apply certain attributes to him or her due to the students’ notions of what that nationality symbolizes and reflects. In this regard, the teaching of IC challenges students to be aware of what attitudes are evoked in them and to take responsibility for their own actions when they interact in heterogeneous groups. Consequently, the teaching of IC encourages students to try to dispel any stereotyping and not to create prejudices that may hinder communication.

Knowledge is another component that constitutes IC (ibid., p. 35). This component includes students’ knowledge of the different cultures in which they and their fellow citizens are brought up, but also the knowledge about how these groups interact in different settings. Furthermore, it also encompasses having some knowledge of the culture the speaker of the target language possesses. Acquiring this kind of knowledge is a process learned throughout life and is vital for the communication to have a positive outcome. Byram (ibid., p. 34) highlights the fact that students may bring with them notions of having a “national identity”, which incorporates different distinctive markers for the group they consider themselves to

belong to. Such distinctive markers may be how people say hello or what clothes to wear, which, for example, may be based on what religion they adhere to. The knowledge students have of speakers they interact with is based on what they have learned in their own milieu and may not be completely compatible to the knowledge citizens in the other culture have. In such a scenario there is a risk that stereotyping and prejudices are being expressed (Byram, 1997, p. 36).

Skills are also components of IC. Byram (ibid., p. 37) divides *skills* in two components: interpreting and relating on the one hand and discovering and interacting on the other. Regarding interpreting and relating, Byram (ibid.) explains *skills* as having the ability to understand and relate to information given by someone other than a fellow countryman. This includes being able to read between the lines and to understand nuances as well as the actual information being given. To be able to understand and relate to information from another country may be difficult in the sense that students bring with them preconceptions from their own cultural background and from what is learned in school and this may influence students' comprehension of what they are to interpret. Making references to one's own practices and behaviours may prevent understanding how the information from the particular culture is given. In this sense, the teaching of IC focuses on how to find an answer to and efficiently deal with any possible misunderstandings, building on what is already known about students' own culture as well as of the culture of those they are interacting with. Byram (ibid.) highlights the fact that *skills* do not necessarily include any cooperation with any other participants but does require a certain amount of interest and for the students to be eager to learn.

As presented above, *skills* also include discovering and interacting (ibid.). This skill is to be used when students still have little understanding but are gathering more know-how while interacting. Experiencing conventions within another culture that differ from those of one's own, requires that students can identify and unfold certain circumstances, occurrences and course of events and be able to draw parallels, and link what is new to information already known. Furthermore, it requires for students to be sensitive to what they may be totally unaccustomed to and regard as alien, and consequently try to overcome any eventual miscommunication, i.e., adapt to new and different situations, in that an intercultural encounter will have a successful outcome.

IC also includes the component of *education*, or *critical cultural awareness* (ibid., p. 101). This component revolves around students' implementation of all aforementioned components in an intercultural encounter, i.e., that the students are able to communicate and

interact on the basis of their understanding of their own attitudes, knowledge and skills, but also on the understanding of that of others, despite the risk of different perspectives (Huber et al., 2014, p. 21). In so doing, students are to avoid any mishaps in communications and interactions and take the measures needed in reaching a mutual and respectful understanding.

The above described components focus on intercultural encounters in which students are to learn how to understand, respect and co-operate constructively with people with different cultural backgrounds in order to develop their IC. Huber et al. (ibid., pp. 9-10) state that in order to preserve democracy in Europe in which human rights, equality and a respect for all citizens continue to flourish, IC is a necessity in school in achieving the abilities needed in order for students to contribute to such a society. In their recommendations for a life-long learning, the Council of Europe therefore advocates IC to be an area of priority in education in all its member states. Thus, in the next sub-chapter suggestions follow on how IC may be promoted and assessed in the ESL classroom.

2.3 Promoting IC in the ESL Classroom

Studying another language than one's mother tongue does not only incorporate learning about the linguistic system and how to communicate, but it also revolves around learning about other cultures. However, in school, culture has been taught as a phenomenon that is constant and that should be studied and understood as uniform facts and norms, rather than a multifaceted and changing phenomenon (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 20). Classroom literature sometimes illustrate such situations, as texts tell about famous buildings or certain events in history, which mirror "a static view of the culture in a body of factual knowledge about a country" (ibid., p. 86). Consequently, language learners do not get the opportunity to engage with the target culture but view it only from the outside. The intercultural aspect of learning is thereby broken as no connection is made between the learners and the target culture.

In the same vein, conversations in classroom literature may show few signs of the culture it ought to mirror. According to Witte (2014), conversations regarding ordering a meal, for example, may become too formal, which increases the risk that the use of the language revolves around "formulaic speech acts which are dependent on stereotypical roles and ignorant of the underlying cultural context" (ibid., p. 271). Such a scenario is counterproductive when it comes to IC because preconceived notions may arise, which has a negative impact on how students perceive new socio-cultural situations (ibid.).

Similarly, Kearney (2016, p. 23) argues that such a pedagogical approach puts the learner in the position of a tourist and only offers a prescriptive view of how to use the language in a certain context. In this sense, learning the target language becomes restrictive and lacks the meaning making intercultural education ought to encompass. Kearney (*ibid.*, p. 20) states that in such situations, culture becomes separated from the cornerstones of language learning. Therefore, another perspective needs to be taken, in which an intercultural view of teaching incorporates both culture and language. Here, Kearney (*ibid.*, p. 29) claims that language education is in need of not only a makeover, but a full transformation, in which both pedagogy and the process of language learning are improved, and in which IC becomes a key element.

In intercultural education, it is vitally important not only to take into consideration, but to illuminate and raise awareness of how language learning and culture correspond and are intertwined strands in language learning. Intercultural education needs to be supplemented with an array of diverse cultural contexts, both on an individual as well as on a group level, in order for the language learners to develop a deeper understanding of different perspectives of culture (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, pp. 91-92). Combining students' own experiences gives the language learners many opportunities to engage, discuss and reflect on what is different in their own culture and in others'. Thus, in the ESL classroom, teachers need to plan students' teaching and learning in order for them to interact and share what they have experienced, and as they communicate, they learn about themselves as well as others. And, in order to have a successful outcome when sharing one's know-how and communicating interculturally, students need to be taught how to develop and practice IC (*ibid.*, p. 63).

By promoting the above-mentioned components of IC (Byram, 1997) in the ESL classroom, students are given the opportunity to critically reflect on themselves and to develop their ability to appreciate other cultures and accept diversity. Accordingly, students may come to be aware of different perspectives and of cultures different from their own, which may enhance their understanding of IC. However, as Kearney (2016, p. 59) emphasizes, the process of developing IC does not come automatically. Although students are great contributors in themselves in that they bring with them a certain amount of knowledge, and from various fields as well, teaching IC requires a well-planned pedagogy in which the teacher adapts the material being used to the situation in hand, in order to enable, encourage and promote learning in which students may reach new vantage points.

In order to implement a well-planned pedagogy in the ESL classroom, in which education focuses on developing students' IC, the right conditions must be provided. Neuner (2012, p. 11) argues that a common vision regarding IC must permeate the idea of how schools are to be governed, how the curriculum is to be designed and how teacher education is to be developed. All parts are interdependent for the successful implementation of IC. Kearney (2016, p. 13), referring to Robinson (1978), supports this stance and adds that learning another language does not automatically include learning about another culture. Apart from studying focus-on-form and expanding one's linguistic abilities, language learning must include an expansion of one's area of linguistic competence in that it also comprises an understanding of how to use the language in an array of intercultural encounters. According to Kearney (*ibid.*, pp. 27-28), there are also other challenges concerning the notion of culture and how it ought to be addressed in language teaching. To begin with, the ideology around which the curriculum is constructed is a challenge in that it points out the direction for language education *per se*. Furthermore, how teachers then comprehend the notion of culture and put it into practice in their classroom pedagogy is yet to be researched. Thus, Kearney too emphasizes the need for a unified strategy to be able to develop students' IC in the ESL classroom (*ibid.*).

Students may be taught about the concept of IC and its various components through both formal, informal and non-formal education (Byram, 1997, p. 65). Formal education takes place in the classroom where the teacher structures, guides and scaffolds students' learning. However, the classroom may also be where students' informal education takes place in that students bring with them and contemplate on knowledge acquired outside school (*ibid.*). The different learning methods take place in tandem and, as such, benefit from one another. Non-formal education takes place when students acquire knowledge independently, outside the school environment (*ibid.*, p. 69). In order to develop their IC in such situations, students need to make use of what they have learned about the different components of IC and execute these appropriately. This kind of initiative requires that the students have some knowledge of how to proceed. Consequently, it is during such circumstances that a well-planned pedagogy builds, facilitates and promotes students' development of IC. Again, the value of a common vision for implementing IC cannot be overestimated.

When the pedagogical planning takes place, teachers must also take into consideration that learning ESL in the classroom is not comparable to learning one's mother tongue (Witte, 2014, p. 298). The mother tongue has been the instrument for the learner in numerous sociocultural situations. The learner may not put the same effort into ESL and will not use it

to the same extent, since it may not be necessary for full participation in everyday life. Therefore, it is essential, also for educators, to practise ESL in many different social situations in the classroom, since it most often is difficult to use the target language in authentic situations. Further, it is vital that underperformance among students with limited knowledge of English is addressed, both in terms of their linguistic proficiency and in the development of IC. Mastering the English language is however not a requirement on its own for becoming interculturally competent (Deardorff, 2016, p.121).

Furthermore, educators need to be careful and sensitive enough not to limit students to their ethnicity only (Witte 2014, p. 339). Instead, all students should be representatives of the ethics and principles their school values. Thus, students will need to be prepared to work across cultures, not to devalue their peers' competencies but learn about them and adapt diverse perspectives in order to better cooperate interculturally.

When promoting IC in the classroom, free speech is an activity in which students may engage well. Participating in such activities can strengthen students' ability to understand each other in that they share their inner thoughts, beliefs and values (ibid., p. 309). Free speech may, for example, revolve around one's own real-life experiences regarding intercultural encounters or what the students have experienced through visual media, such as in films. A tool developed for supporting students to share their thoughts and beliefs is the "Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters" (AIE) (Byram et al., 2009). The AIE (ibid.) is produced by the Council of Europe to support students' experiences of intercultural meetings and to guide students in their understanding of another culture in that they develop their critical cultural awareness. The AIE is designed to be used by both teachers and students. It can be used in both formal and informal teaching and learning. The purpose is to promote IC by asking questions about intercultural encounters, some of which are more comprehensive than others. The questions are asked based on the different concepts of IC, but without the actual terminology (ibid., p. 5). Students may either write down their answers or record them after having discussed the different topics of conversation and exchanged experiences and thoughts (see sub-chapter 4.1).

In a free-speech activity, students need to be asked to reflect on their attitudes and experiences and to write them down when the exercises are completed. Such activities may stimulate a higher order thinking that contributes to students' understanding, analytical capabilities, as well as to their cognitive processes concerning IC, in which their actions, as well as their peers', attitudes and beliefs are pondered on. Here, students may be asked to reflect on their "social identities", and if they find their actions and reactions to be different or

not when compared to those of their peers' (Byram, 1997, pp. 32-33). This includes students' reactions towards the possibility of being stereotyped, i.e., being criticised for having values and beliefs other than their peers, and teachers may monitor how students then choose to negotiate and resolve such scenarios. A first overview and an understanding may be established, whether students are able to use the above-mentioned components of IC, i.e., if and how students exercise *attitudes, knowledge, skills* and *critical cultural awareness*. Hence, the above-mentioned activities give educators a starting point in assessing students' development of IC.

2.4 Assessing IC in the ESL Classroom

Assessing IC has been a matter of repeated concern for language teachers (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 123). The relation between language, culture and critical cultural awareness has been one problem area. Another area encompasses the actual assessment and whether it is even possible to assess students' attitudes and beliefs. Scarino (2010) argues that assessment is to be objective, yet, teachers are to assess "values" (p. 325). It follows that the assessment of IC is then a challenging operation. However, researchers agree that assessment is not only feasible but also imperative (Borghetti, 2017).

Assessment in IC is imperative in that it may promote students to take charge of their learning and consequently it raises awareness of developing interculturality (ibid.). Notwithstanding, it is important to make sure that assessment in the ESL classroom does what it is meant to do. Byram (1997, p. 104) points to specific implications, for example, when assessing students' language proficiency, i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking, school has traditionally assessed each proficiency separately. Byram (ibid.) opposes such an assessment in IC since it would fail to include assessment of the components in relation to each other, i.e., the components *attitudes, knowledge, skills* and *critical awareness* are interdependent. In order to assess students' increasing knowledge of and proficiency in IC, Byram (ibid. p. 106) therefore states that a holistic view must be taken. In doing so, he suggests a language portfolio as a tool for documenting students' development in IC over time. By using a portfolio as an assessment tool, both students and teachers will have a clear overview of students' progress in becoming more interculturally aware. Borghetti (2017, p. 9) supports this stance and advocates that a "shift from assessment-of learning to assessment-as learning" is to be taken. In this way, students and teachers may adopt a formative view of how the assessment of students' IC should be carried out. Formative assessment encompasses

assessing students on several occasions during a longer period of time (Deardorff, 2016, p. 126). Here, self-assessment tools or, for example, reflections in writing may be the basis for assessing students' development towards IC (ibid., p. 122). Through assessing the learning process, teachers are then able to give support and monitor students as their linguistic and cultural knowledge develops. Also, not to forget, teachers may notice possible confusions and, if needed, point students in the right direction.

Likewise, Huber et al. (2014, p. 34) argue that a language portfolio is to be used in order to assess students' critical intercultural awareness. For example, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is developed for students "to write reflectively on intercultural experiences of various kinds" (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 6). It promotes students in becoming more proficient in the English language, as well as supports teachers in their work. The ELP consists of three different parts: the language passport, the language biography and the dossier. In the language passport students register their experiences of intercultural encounters on a regular basis and bring their language skills up to date. The language biography consists of plans, reflections and assessments. In the language biography, there are templates in which students continuously during the school year fill in their perceptions of their own intercultural experience and awareness in order to make their learning more visible to them. Filling in their perceptions, they use 'Can Do'- statements. The 'Can Do' - statements are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (see *Appendix 8*), which aims to convey what the students can do instead of what they cannot do (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 22). The dossier is where students may collect their work over time. The portfolio may also be used as part of students' CV, in future job applications, where records of their development of IC could be of interest for potential employers (Byram, 1997, p. 108).

Although assessment of IC cannot be absolute as its development is constantly evolving, the ELP follows students' progression, supporting their learning, and at the same time provides a tool for self-assessment (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 6). This view corresponds well with the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School in which it is stipulated that teachers in Swedish schools must perform assessment: formative and summative (The National Agency for Education, 2011). Students' progress is to be made transparent and followed-up on, both in relation to the students themselves and to their parents. Furthermore, students are also to participate in assessment in that they continuously assess their own work as well as the work of their peers and evaluate what may need to be developed (ibid., p.13). In so doing, students are aware of, and accustomed to, how

assessment practices may be executed by teachers and themselves. In the next sub-chapter, the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School will be further discussed in relation to IC.

2.5 The Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School

So far, this master's thesis has described that a cornerstone in the teaching of IC is that students are to develop an understanding of what constitutes both their own and others' identities, as well as their cultural backgrounds. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity students encounter on a daily basis, and the difficulties of collaboration that this may entail, the teaching of IC aims at promoting democratic values and teaching students how to act and respond with openness and acceptance in intercultural encounters (Huber et al., 2012, pp. 5-6). Consequently, it is the concern for possible strained relationships and hostility towards people with cultural affiliations other than one's own that underlies the teaching of IC and the promotion of students' critical cultural awareness. These objectives correspond well with those of the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School (The National Agency for Education, 2011), which now will be accounted for.

The National Agency for Education (*ibid.*, p. 5) stipulates that school shall communicate and pass on beliefs and norms on which the Swedish society rests. Furthermore, school shall encourage students to develop an aspiration to learn throughout their lives, respecting each other no matter what origin or religious beliefs they may have. Tolerance, empathy and equal opportunities are thus essential key concepts, declared to accompany students along with their quest for more knowledge, no matter ethnicity or gender. Drawing on globalisation and a society that has become increasingly diverse, it is also stipulated that school is to foster and make students aware of the culture and traditions of which they are brought up in and taking part, and of which will be passed on to the next generations, but also to treasure and respect the culture and traditions of others. Thus, school is to adopt an "international perspective" which is to permeate the view of society (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Furthermore, the commentary material for the syllabus in English for year 9 states that the individual's socio-cultural knowledge is developed through intercultural experiences and encounters, i.e., knowledge of what are accepted codes and values in other cultures (The National Agency for Education, 2017, p. 6). This may lead to a more tolerant action, a deeper understanding of different cultures, which, in turn, may result in a critical cultural awareness. Students gain perspective on basic values, which in the long run can contribute to reducing the gaps in society in that a mutual understanding and acceptance of each other is developed.

In the commentary material (The National Agency for Education, 2017, p. 7), it is also clarified that having intercultural knowledge means that students can adapt their language to different situations, purposes and recipients. Furthermore, it is declared that a social and intercultural ability includes knowing and using, as far as possible, the cultural codes and language used to be able to communicate in both formal and informal situations.

This sub-chapter has presented the view of intercultural education as stipulated in the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School and in the commentary material for the subject of English for year 9. As such, the school's mission in the field of intercultural education is to communicate an international perspective and in doing so, provide a background to, and a broader perspective on, the social and cultural expressions that students are surrounded by and to teach them to see their own reality in a global context. In the next sub-chapter, a presentation of the Bergen 'Can Do' Project (Hasselgreen, 2003) follows, in which the above-described international perspective and global context were included.

2.6 The Bergen 'Can Do' Project

The Bergen 'Can Do' project started as a school project in 2000 in the county of Bergen, Norway, but transformed with the help of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) the following year into a Nordic-Baltic project consisting of 8 participating countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Hasselgreen, 2003). The project aimed at finding out how to assess 15-year-old students' IC in the ESL classroom (ibid., p. 52). In doing so, it was decided that first a writing contest (see *Appendix 1*) was to be launched in which the participating students were to write about their "know-how" on IC (ibid., p. 47). The students were presented with 4 different themes, which they were asked to reflect on before they started writing. Contemplating these themes was thought to initiate students' know-how of known habits and actions thought to be performed in another manner in a culture different from that of their own. The themes presented were the following:

1. daily lives activities and traditions
2. *social conventions* (e.g. 'good manners', normal ways of behaving, dressing, meeting and visiting people, etc.)
3. *values, beliefs and attitudes* (e.g. what people are proud of, talk about, worry about, find funny, etc.)
4. *non-verbal language* (e.g. body language and contact, hand movements, facial expressions, etc.). (Hasselgreen, 2003, p. 47)

40 students contributed and all essays were closely examined and analysed. The result of the analysis was then presented in a framework (see *Appendix 2*). Based on the components in the framework a self-assessment for students aged 15 (see *Appendix 3*) was created in which they were to assess their “intercultural awareness and competence” (ibid., p. 52). The assessment was also developed based on the can-do statements of the CEFR (see *Appendix 8*), with the aim of assessing students’ progress over a longer period of time (ibid., p. 46).

3. Method, Material and Participants

Sub-chapter 3.1 presents the method and material of the investigation while sub-chapter 3.2 presents the participants, i.e., their cultural backgrounds, their ages and for how long they have studied the English language.

3.1 Method and Material

The method of this master thesis replicates the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project, which has been described above (Hasselgreen, 2003). The 23 students taking part in this study were first asked to reflect on their knowledge of other cultures' customs and actions that differed from those of their own. On this followed an instruction to write an essay on the same theme. The essays were thereafter analysed and compared to the result of the Bergen ‘Can Do’ project.

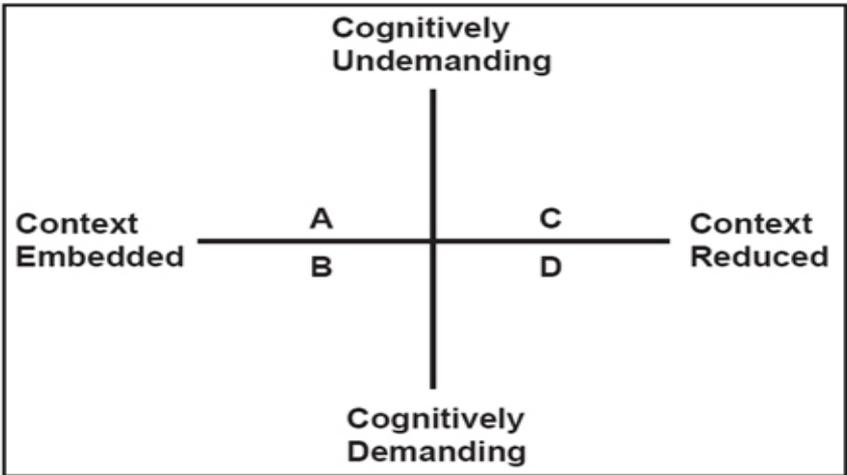
This investigation includes a smaller number of students, nevertheless, the result may be compared to the Bergen ‘Can Do’ Project (Hasselgreen, 2003) and as such, be analysed and contrasted to that project. The intention throughout the investigation was to find out if the same result could be established with a smaller number of students, of diverse backgrounds, 20 years later, and in a time where they are living in a more multicultural society.

The project started with a writing assignment that was initiated and carried out for three 45-minute lessons of which the first two were consecutive lessons. At the beginning of lesson 1, students were introduced to the project and asked to take part by writing an essay. All students accepted the request although some hesitated regarding the possibility to write a whole essay on the topic “What do I or other people do differently?” (see *Appendix 4*). Having discussed the importance of scaffolding and taking one step at a time, a small-group discussion on how people with diverse cultural backgrounds use non-verbal language, i.e. hand gestures or facial expressions was introduced. The reason behind the choice of subject for discussion had to do with the very word ‘gesture’ that previously had been discussed as it was a word used in the literature students had studied. After a 10-minute small-group discussion a class-discussion followed in which all groups were to present what they had talked about. The whiteboard was used in order to support the process, concretising, explaining and referring, making sure all contributions were given the same importance. The intention of this procedure was to scaffold the upcoming essay writing since all students had varied knowledge in the English language and I feared they would not be able to write what they actually knew, without having had a thorough introduction to the subject. Then followed a 5-minute individual contemplation, in which the students were to ponder on the 4 different

themes, replicated from the Bergen project (Hasselgreen, 2003). The students were also asked to take notes or make mind-maps to visualise thoughts and to create ideas and build connections which could be elaborated on and expanded further on. After this the essay writing assignment took off and continued during the assigned time (see *Figure 4*). The scaffolding continued throughout the remaining lessons and the students were able to ask questions on the themes as well as on expressions, spelling and vocabulary in the English language.

Regarding the scaffolding, the support given was based on the research by Cummins (2006, p. 68), whose work is highly accredited and for some time has formed the basis for language education in Swedish schools. Cummins (*ibid.*, p. 66) presents his idea of scaffolding as giving students who still are developing their proficiency in the target language the support needed to express themselves appropriately, and to be able to execute assignments in cognitively demanding context-bound situations. In such cases, assignments are often successfully executed while students who are not presented with assignments with the same degree of difficulty or support, will not show the same learning curve (*ibid.*). Students who are given support in cognitively demanding context-bound assignments, are subsequently to be found near B and D in figure 3. As Cummins' model of contextual support is based on students' experiences and addresses culture-bound aspects, it complies well with one of the aims of this project: to investigate students' perceptions of IC.

Figure 3. Range of contextual support and degree of cognitive involvement in language tasks and activities. (Cummins, 2006, p. 68).



Gibbons (2015) too supports the idea of scaffolding and emphasizes that scaffolding is “a temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone” (p. 16). In this sense the scaffolding is a temporary support for the students to become more independent in their learning as well as in their development of becoming more interculturally aware.

As mentioned above, some students expressed their concern about not being able to write an entire essay on the subject. Since some of the students lacked experience of writing longer texts and since some had not studied the English language for more than 4 years, it was decided that between 150 - 300 words would be sufficient, instead of the 500 words on each of the themes as in the Bergen project (Hasselgreen, 2003). The decision was made despite the knowledge that the result could be affected. However, the outset was to compare two studies but with other participants and at another point in time, which already included other elements than in the first study, which were to be considered when analysing the result. Possible differences were thus taken into account, and were factors that formed the basis for the analysis. See *Figure 4* for the schedule.

Figure 4. Schedule of writing assignment “What do I or other people do differently?”

Lesson	Schedule
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● introduction of writing assignment ● small-groups discussions ● class discussions ● scaffolding ● writing mind maps ● students start writing: “What do I or other people do differently?”
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● students continue writing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● students continue writing
	Essays are to be handed in, thereafter read, studied, analysed and compared to the Bergen project by the teacher.

3.2 The Participants

The group of students taking part in this study constitutes a multi-ethnic group of students on the upper secondary programme Individual Alternative (IA). IA is an introductory programme and constitutes an individual form of education aimed at educating and supporting students in that they will reach passing grades for compulsory school and eventually be prepared to continue studying at a national programme. The student group consists of 13 girls and 10 boys between 16 and 19 years old. Most of them are foreign born and are also plurilingual. Only 4 students out of 23 have a Swedish ethnicity and speak no other languages than Swedish and English (referred to here as students 3, 8, 13 and 23) (see *Figure 5*). The group of students were selected because they were the only ones taught by the investigating teacher.

The students are not yet able to continue studying at a national programme, and the reasons why they are not yet taking on higher studies vary. Some students lack passing grades since they have recently immigrated to Sweden and, in some cases, have had a short school background prior to this. Some of these students are beginner learners who have studied the English language for up to 4 years only and may therefore have fragmented knowledge. Other students lack passing grades since they during earlier school years have had low attendance and not been able to complete their studies. Hence, because of the students’ educational and cultural backgrounds, the students’ writing skills vary considerably. In this sense, they all have rather rudimentary language skills.

Figure 5. Students partaking in the essay writing

Student	Place of birth	Mother tongue	Age	Years studying English
1	Iraq	Arabic	19	5
2	Somalia	Somali	19	4
3	Sweden	Swedish	18	7
4	Somalia	Somali	18	6
5	Lebanon	Arabic	18	6
6	Afghanistan	Dari	18	4
7	Syria	Arabic	18	6
8	Sweden	Swedish	18	7
9	Somalia	Somali	18	5

10	Iraq	Arabic	18	4
11	Somalia	Somali	17	6
12	Iraq	Arabic	17	5
13	Sweden	Swedish	17	7
14	Afghanistan	Dari	17	4
15	Poland	Polish	17	6
16	Lebanon	Arabic	17	4
17	Turkey	Turkish	17	5
18	Somalia	Somali	17	5
19	Vietnam	Vietnamese	17	6
20	Thailand	Thai	16	4
21	Syria	Arabic	16	5
22	Somalia	Somali	16	4
23	Sweden	Swedish	16	5

The significant information on which this master thesis is based includes 23 essays. The essays were analysed and compared to the Bergen results in order to find any agreements and/or disagreements. The results will be presented in the next chapter.

4. RESULTS

Sub-chapter 4.1 presents the results regarding students' perceptions of cultural know-how. In doing so, the students' essays will be interpreted and analysed in order to find out if the essay writing may promote IC in the ESL classroom. Furthermore, the result will be compared to that of the Bergen 'Can Do' project. Sub-chapter 4.2 presents whether the result will lend itself to developing a self-assessment form for ESL students. The result will be compared to that of the Bergen 'Can Do' project.

4.1 Results from the writing assignment versus the Bergen 'Can Do' Project

In the following the results from the essay writing is presented. The writing assignment is a replica of the Bergen 'Can Do' project (Hasselgreen, 2003) in which 40 students from 8 countries took part.

In the current assignment 23 students with culturally diverse backgrounds took part. The students are between 16 and 19 years of age and have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. All but four speak other languages than Swedish and English. The students have studied the English language for different lengths of time and therefore have varied language skills. The students' writing skills vary too, due to differences in schooling prior to coming to Sweden, but also due to low attendance at Swedish schools. Consequently, the need to support students' writing was ubiquitous throughout their writing since none of the students regarded themselves as having adequate language proficiency to complete the assignment at the level they thought would be expected. Thus, some support was given regarding expressions or vocabulary so that students would not have a sense of underachievement. Such scaffolding has proven to have successful outcomes in students' language acquisition, according to Gibbons (2015, pp. 17-18), in that students who are challenged will perform better and learn more while being given support for a limited period of time, until managing on their own. The implications concerning students' fear of not being able to perform at the level they thought was needed, and the effect it possibly might have had on the result, have been noted and will be further discussed in sub-chapter 4.1 as well as in chapter 5.

The students were asked to write an essay on the subject "What do I or other people do differently?" (see *Appendix 4*), in which they were to describe their cultural know-how. They

were asked to pretend they were meeting a student from another culture, telling him or her what would be interesting or useful to know concerning the following themes:

- 1. daily life activities and traditions**
- 2. social conventions** (e.g. ‘good manners’, normal ways of behaving, dressing, meeting and visiting people etc etc)
- 3. values, beliefs and attitudes** (e.g. what people are proud of, talk about, worry about, find funny, etc, etc)
- 4. non-verbal language** (e.g. body language and contact, hand movements, facial expressions, etc, etc).

The essays with all students’ examples on the different themes (see *Appendix 5*) were then closely read and formed the basis for a framework (see *Appendix 6*), similar to that of the Bergen project (see *Appendix 2*), but with another result. Based on the result, a self-assessment tool for critical cultural awareness and competence was developed (see *Appendix 7*). Precisely as in the Bergen project (Hasselgreen, 2003, p. 47), the themes were supplemented on the basis of the results of students’ writings, i.e., another theme was included: “Ability to use verbal communication means”. Consequently, the 4 themes became 5 (see *Appendix 6* for the complete framework):

1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions
2. Ability to deal with social conventions
3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users
4. Ability to use verbal communication means
5. Ability to use non-verbal language

The results show that students' specifications of the themes had both similarities and differences to the Bergen project. These similarities and differences will now be accounted for.

Concerning theme **1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions**, 21 of the 23 students chose to write about this theme, i.e., all students but student 11 and student 17. Within the theme, the specifications revolve around the following:

Everyday family life: Family size (students 5, 7, 12, 16 and 20), varieties of food (students 18, 19, 21 and 23), meals (students 16 and 18), housing (students 9 and 12), pets and other animals (students 18 and 19), daily routine (student 23), housework (student 16), TV

(student 23). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also a difference: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about the Internet.

School: System (students 1, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 19, 21 and 22), routines (students 6, 19 and 21), class sizes (student 5), uniforms (student 6). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about grades, meals, brakes and social needs.

Leisure time: Going out with friends (students 4, 15 and 20), sport - keeping fit (students 4, 14, and 15), holidays (students 19 and 20). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also a difference: in this project, one student also chose to write about singing (student 1), which was not included as a specification by the students in the Bergen project.

Festivities: National festivals and feast days (students 2, 3, 4, 20 and 21), Christmas (student 13). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about birthdays, other international feast days and youth festivals. In addition, another difference was that in this project, another specification of the theme was added: sing and dance with the family (student 16).

Country - generally, living conditions: Climate (students 4, 7, 9, 10, 16, 18 and 19), nature (students 4, 7, 9, 10 and 20), demography (students 4, 7, 19 and 20), location (students 4, 7, 10 and 19), geography (students 4, 7 and 10), language (students 4, 7 and 10), occupations (student 7), social classes (student 20). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about farming activities, urban-rural communities and regional differences.

A majority, ca 91 %, of the students chose to write about this theme. This indicates that it is a theme that students carry close to their hearts and find it relatively easy to write about too, despite the fact that some are still beginner writers in the English language. A conclusion that can be drawn is that in order to implement IC in the ESL classroom, this theme would be an excellent starting point for a speaking activity, in which students exchange information about who they are and about their families, i.e., tell about their own identities, families and cultures. A writing assignment may follow, in which students reflect on their experiences, knowledge, beliefs and values. This may serve as a foundation for ensuing assignments.

Apparently, climate, which 7 students wrote about, was a much-liked area of interest in the essay writing and may therefore be a suggested topic to start off with in a speaking activity. To compare the climate in different countries may be a rather neutral subject to

discuss and may ease any anxiety or fear of not being able to use the target language to one's expectations. Also, schooling and different school systems, which 9 students wrote about, may be a topic that can stimulate students to dare start talking to each other, expressing their experiences and attitudes towards school systems and what similarities and differences there are to be found. To facilitate communication, teachers may support students with questions on specific themes: What is important to you in life and what do you think is important to others regarding climate and schooling? Do you think there is a difference between what people in your own country think and what people from other countries think? In doing so, students are asked to express their attitudes, i.e., their curiosity and openness regarding the specific themes and teachers are able to monitor and assess students' "readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 91). For example, student 5 mentions that school days are longer in Lebanon than in Sweden and that school also is stricter than in Sweden. To support the on-going discussion the teacher may ask why students think this is the case and what may be positive or negative about different situations. Such support may elicit more information to be shared which, in turn, may widen students' knowledge of how one's social identity mirrors that of their fellow countrymen. According to Byram (*ibid.*, p. 36), such action lends itself well to fruitful engagement as students' understanding of each other deepens. As mentioned above, it is vital to remember that the monitoring and assessment need to be practiced at different periods of time in order to gather sufficient evidence for students' progression in developing their IC.

A steppingstone in teaching IC is having students noticing the connection between themselves and others. Starting off by introducing themselves, and continuously discussing what shapes their own identities and their living conditions, will make a bridge to discussing what is significant to the culture they have at hand. Such a scenario aids the discussion of the culture they believe themselves to belong to, but also a discussion about what forms their own cultural identity and that of others (*ibid.*, p. 20). In practising discussing and sharing attitudes and values in this way, students may gain more knowledge and may practise different skills in regard to IC, i.e., listening and observing, evaluating and analysing, interpreting and relating, which form the basis for successful future intercultural encounters. By doing so, students will expand their understanding of critical cultural awareness.

In the Bergen project, students chose to write about the Internet. None of the students chose to write about it in this project. When analysing the result, one conclusion that may be drawn is that the Bergen project was carried out in 2003, 18 years prior to this project, and students were not as frequent users of the Internet as they are today. Computers are not only

standard equipment in schools today, but all students use the Internet in school and most students use the Internet on their mobile phones.

Concerning 'country - generally, living conditions', no students chose to write about urban-rural communities and regional differences. One interpretation may be that, in this first assignment of discussing what is different in other cultures, urban-rural communities may not be the first thing students chose to write about because there were other more interesting choices for them to choose to tell another student, coming from another culture, about.

Concerning theme **2. Ability to deal with social conventions**, 15 students chose to write about this theme (students 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23).

Within the theme, the specifications revolve around the following:

Roles and relationships: Family – society (students 1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 23), family circles and cohesion (students 2, 5, 7, 12, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 23), men – women (students 1, 2, 5, 17, 22 and 23), younger – older generation (students 2, 11, 13, 19, 21 and 23), women's working situation (students 2, 5, 10 and 12), helping each other (students 20, 21 and 23), boys – girls (students 1, 2, 5, 10, 12 and 17). Here, students' specifications of the theme were all similar to the ones in the Bergen project.

Visiting – hospitality: Punctuality (student 6), sharing (student 13). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about introductions, gifts, washing hands, taking off shoes, sitting down and leaving early.

Social occasions: Students' specifications of the theme show no similarities. In the Bergen project students also chose to write about funerals and weddings. In the current project none of the students chose to write any specifications regarding this theme.

Expressing emotions: Students' specifications of the theme show no similarities. In the Bergen project students also chose to write about degree of noise, excitability and flamboyance. In the current project none of the students chose to write any specifications regarding this theme.

Going out: Etiquette and habits (student 21). In the Bergen project students also chose to write about smoking and drinking.

Clothes: Dress code - general (student 14). In the Bergen project students also chose to write about dressing formally - for going out.

Quite many students, ca 65 %, chose to write about theme 2. Most interesting was 'roles and relationships', which 13 students chose to write about. As in theme 1, this interest may be explained as a subject that is carried close to students' hearts and therefore is easier to

write about. This interpretation may be supported by the fact that students wrote about all specified parts of the theme, i.e., there was a 100 % agreement with the Bergen project. In so doing, the students made clear what they find to be most important to discuss with a visitor from another cultural background.

However, what needs immediate attention here is the need to discuss the different concepts of IC with the students, so that they may encounter certain difficulties regarding intercultural encounters, as different values and attitudes may arise. Both teachers and students need to be prepared for the fact that perceptions such as stereotypes and prejudices can come to the surface. For example, one specified part of theme 2 is about women's working situations. This may create discussions that may not be too negative, still they may stir up emotions and require teachers to monitor, support and guide students along in their discussions as comments on equality may be found. Byram (1997, pp. 44-46), recommends teachers to discuss equality and the concepts of morality and ethics, even if these may be regarded as politicizing language education, as radical ideas and how certain political systems regard certain groups in society are issues school is responsible to address.

Another part of theme 2 may also be an example of the need for teacher attention. Student 1 discusses the differences in values regarding girls' appearances and what is allowed and not allowed in Iraq, regarding dressing and hairstyles: *I cut my hair and have jeans on. In my own country that's not ok. If I had jeans on in my own country people should laugh and be angry. In Sweden it's ok to dress like this.* The student declares herself to dress differently depending on if she is in Sweden or in Iraq. Accordingly, one implication for teaching IC may be a need to clarify that even if one's culture encompasses certain rules for how to dress in a certain environment, dressing only symbolises parts of one's culture (Huber et al., 2014, pp. 13-14). Thus, the nation one is born in does not construct one's whole identity, but is one of many aspects that makes an individual diverse.

To deal with possible comments of stereotyping or students' prejudices, the concept of culture may be discussed based on research. For example, in class, teachers may refer to researchers such as Piller (2017, p. 24), who emphasizes that people do not adhere to only one but to different cultures when socializing in certain settings in which they consider themselves to belong. Thus, being citizens of the same country does not necessarily mean that individuals hold on to the same beliefs or act in the same way. On the contrary, individuals are more complex and diverse than so, and relate to their surroundings in multiple ways depending on an array of different aspects. In doing so, students may be asked to ponder on what cultures they themselves consider they belong to, and find what similarities and differences there may

be. Further, students may be asked to discuss the term cultural tolerance and that some beliefs are deeply embedded in our identity since childhood, and others are learned perpetually throughout our lives in relation to the context we find ourselves in. To successfully develop IC, it is therefore important for students to be alert in that they do not try to dismiss what may be new and yet unknown to them, but adapt and are receptive to other beliefs and values than their own (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 57). Consequently, students are made aware that learning about IC includes a critical cultural awareness of otherness, being conscious of other people's needs and values, in other words: one needs to widen one's cultural frame of reference to be interculturally competent.

In the Bergen project, students also chose to write about more specific themes in regard to 'visiting-hospitality'. Why students in this project did not choose to write about introductions, gifts, washing hands, taking off shoes, sitting down and leaving early cannot be fully explained. However, this may be a question to discuss further in another speaking or writing assignment. The result from this investigation may be compared and discussed in relation to the result from the Bergen project and students may have their say about both similarities and differences to the Bergen project.

Concerning theme **3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users**, 15 of the students chose to write about this theme (students 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20 and 21). Within the theme, the specifications revolve around the following:

Concerned with: Family life (students 9, 11 and 13), diseases (students 9 and 11), keeping fit (students 9 and 11), economy (student 9), prices (student 9), unemployment (student 9). Students' specifications of the theme show both similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about friends, school success, sport, pollution, housing problems, and gossip. However, another difference was found in this project; a new specific part of the theme was added: governmental support (student 9).

Characterisation: Tolerant (students 2, 11, 17 and 18), friendly (students 7, 14 and 17), open-minded (students 11, 17 and 18), caring (students 14 and 17), conservative (students 8 and 13), sincere (students 11 and 17), bad-tempered (student 8), hypocritical (student 8), polite (student 7), rude (student 8). Students' specifications of the theme show both similarities but also a difference: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about 'simple'.

Religion: Church-going (students 2, 6, 13, 18 and 21). Students' specifications of the theme show a similarity but also a difference: in this project, one student (student 2) also chose to write about going to the mosque.

Beliefs: Skin colour (student 4). The student's specification of the theme shows both a similarity but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about superstitions, physical appearance and hair colour.

Cultural heritage: National history and independence (student 4), country (student 17), nature (student 17), population (student 17). Students' specifications of the theme show both similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about national heroes, athletes, sportsmen and singers.

National stereotypes and reality: Conflicts (student 4, 6 and 15), emigration (student 4), ethnic identities (student 20), terrorism (student 4), war (student 4). Students' specifications of the theme show only similarities to the Bergen project.

Sense of humour: Telling jokes about other people and nations (student 3). The student's specification of the theme shows both a similarity but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about direct humour, irony, own and others' misfortune.

Also, here, in theme 3, ca 65 % of the students chose to write about the specified parts of theme. For this theme, the spread was greater when it comes to the number of students who wrote about each part. It may be that this theme was less interesting to write about than theme 1 and 2, or, the specified themes may have been more difficult or too complex for the students to express their thoughts and knowledge about. Another interpretation may be that students did not find their language skills to be sufficient since, for example, subjects like economy, prices, unemployment, irony and sense of humour may be too abstract, and students may find themselves to lack the vocabulary needed to be able to express their knowledge, thoughts and attitudes regarding these contexts. In this sense, the language demands in this part of the assignment may have been too high, despite the support given. Implications for future intercultural education may be that pre-writing activities are more thoroughly discussed and that students take part in more formal education, in which they are guided towards how to use language more appropriately in particular contexts. As a result, especially with beginner learners in their formal education, teachers need to "integrate subject teaching with its associated language" (Gibbons, 2015, p. 9).

Another reason why students may be more cautious to write about theme 3 than theme 1 and 2 may be explained by different countries' cultural frames of reference in terms of curricula. While theme 1 and 2 revolves around more neutral subjects like family, school and

climate, theme 3 may touch upon themes that students do not necessarily have any experience of either discussing or writing about in school before, since these may be regarded as too controversial. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) highlight the fact that “whereas some genres exist in all or most cultures as recognized patterns of purposeful communication behavior [...] not all genres are found in all countries” (p. 27). In other words, different cultures have different norms regarding what students are to write about in school, and how, and this explains why theme 3 did not receive the same interest as theme 1 and 2. Discussing attitudes, beliefs and values regarding ethnicity, religion, conflicts or terrorism, may create ethical issues entailing negative implications in that students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and bring with them fundamentally different views. Hence, in such cases it is of vital importance, as is exemplified in the comment following theme 2, that teachers monitor students’ discussions.

Few students wrote about conflicts (students 4, 6 and 15) or ethnic identities (student 20), which, on the one hand may come as a surprise since most of the students have fled war-torn countries, but, on the other hand, such subjects may be too negative or sensitive to write about.

Concerning theme **4. Ability to use verbal communication means**, 7 students chose to write about this theme (students 3, 5, 10, 12, 16, 17 and 20). Within the theme, the specifications revolve around the following:

Addressing people: Greetings (students 5, 12 and 16), degrees of politeness and distance (student 20). Students' specifications of the theme show both similarities but also a difference: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about apologising.

Striking up conversation: Talking to friends and strangers (students 3, 10 and 16) and being quiet (student 10). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about being noisy, turn-taking, interrupting, talking to small children - adults, and using thank you, please.

Sayings, proverbs: Students’ specifications of the theme show no similarities. In the Bergen project, students chose to write about animal references.

Emotions, feelings: Impulsiveness (student 17) and shyness (student 5). Students' specifications of the theme show both similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about expressing love, embarrassment and taboos. Another difference to the Bergen project was that one more specification of the theme was introduced by a student (student 17) in the current project: expressing fear.

In theme 4, ca 40% of the students wrote about the specified parts of the theme. Regarding this theme, not many students chose to write about the different specifications.

Despite having been supported throughout the assignment, the lack of exposure to the English language for some of the students may be the answer to why the engagement with this specific theme was not higher. Another interpretation could be that the first themes are more related to teenagers on a daily basis as opposed to the use of, for example, sayings and proverbs, which may not be easy to have knowledge about and express one's thoughts about, even in one's mother tongue, as such a subject might be too abstract. What also is important to remember is that sayings and proverbs may be "culture-specific" (Witte, 2014, p. 280). They may also be used metaphorically, which may be too cognitively demanding and understandably difficult to explain both in another language and one's mother tongue. Given the circumstances and in regard to students' development of the different concepts of IC, they need to gain more *knowledge* and *skills* to be able to explore the suggested parts of the theme and discuss and write about them (Byram, 1997, p. 33).

When discussing the result with the students, it would be interesting to evaluate why this theme was not as common as the others. Asking students to reflect once again on the very themes they may not have been able to write about, may entice new understandings and make new connections within different cultural perspectives. In doing so, different conceptions and experiences may come to the fore, and "opens new perspectives on diversity as a cultural phenomenon" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 101). By scaffolding students' writings, a range of different questions may be used based on the AIE (Byram et al., 2009, pp. 10-11). For example, teachers may ask students to tell why they chose to write about certain specific parts of the theme, who were involved, where and when it took place and what kind of feelings it may have evoked in the students themselves but also in others. Furthermore, students may be asked to ponder on similarities and differences in order to interpret and relate to the situation and in doing so, teachers will support their thinking about cultural awareness. Other students may take part in small group discussions and, based on the discussions, they may be asked to write another text of the subject. In doing so, students will step by step enhance their understanding about IC.

Concerning theme **5. Ability to use non-verbal language**, 6 students chose to write about this theme (students 3, 6, 8, 9, 14 and 15). Within the theme, the specifications revolve around the following:

Body language: Gesticulating – hand signals (students 3, 6, 14 and 15), shaking hands (students 6 and 9), hugging (student 9), kissing (student 6). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also a difference: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about nodding.

Body contact: Students' specifications of the theme show no similarities. In the Bergen project, students chose to write about touching and standing too close, too far away.

Facial expression: Eye contact (student 8) and showing anger (student 8). Students' specifications of the theme show similarities but also differences: in the Bergen project, students also chose to write about winking, smiling and crying.

In this theme, only 23 % chose to write about the different specifications. Naturally, activities that for different reasons do not have the expected outcome, despite a well-planned pedagogy, will have certain implications. In this case, where students may have difficulties writing, teachers can support them by asking questions. Questions from the AIE (Byram et al., 2009) may be used and this may be what makes students engage more. For example, regarding 'body contact' students may be asked to reflect on the prevailing situation around Covid and if they think people react differently regarding body contact when having different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, p. 101) also suggest teachers not to dismiss activities that do not have an outcome they had planned for or expected but use the opportunity to plan ahead for new learning activities. In doing so, the activities may be thoroughly thought through, worked with and processed in that a deeper knowledge and an awareness may come to the fore. A good starting point in such cases is to find students' personal connections to the activities at hand so that they may become engaged and make connections to earlier experiences, but also to new (ibid., p. 105). Supporting students in this way may encourage them to link their knowledge to new situations, add a greater understanding in reaching a greater awareness. However, Witte (2014, p. 278) emphasizes that students who have not studied the target language for a very long time do not have the capacity to fully cover the process of comparing and contrasting different cultural phenomena. Meaning-making processes need a fuller understanding of all layers of the received information and what is going on before the understanding may be completed.

One implication for the ESL classroom may concern meaning making and the difficulty for beginner learners to completely understand new contexts. According to Kearney (2016, p. 67) students "may be tempted to draw on translations to a linguistic code they are familiar with (their L1s) as a meaning-making strategy [...] rather than attempting to make sense of a form on its own terms, as it appears in a particular text and context in the L2 system and context". To remedy a too narrow meaning making, teachers need to find diverse ways of practising intercultural encounters in which students meet an array of intercultural contexts.

Gibbons (2015, p. 45) too brings attention to students using the target language in highlighting the fact that using the target language in casual discussions with friends is not as

demanding as using it in school, where the target language is to be used in culture-specific and context-bound areas that students may not have been introduced to. Consequently, using the target language in new cultural situations in which one does not share a common know-how of how to behave, or how to express oneself, may make students feel inadequate with a risk of being silent.

Also, Bennett (2009, p. 123) points out that having a certain know-how about a different culture does not automatically result in having intercultural competence per se, since knowledge of a certain context may be inadequate or even lacking when it comes to interacting appropriately, in line with the decorum of the specific context. This is where critical cultural awareness becomes important, which means being able to interpret, mediate and bring forward a successful communication where both parties have a favourable exchange of information. Culture is not homogenous or unchanging but may be taken-for-granted. Students' knowledge about and attitudes to fellow classmates from cultures other than their own may differ since we tend to affiliate ourselves with the culture in which we were born. In this way, students may find that the culture they consider themselves to belong to is the one that is correct. Consequently, beliefs and behaviours that differ from those of one's own may be regarded as too alien with the result of negative attitudes, insecurity and the questioning of other students' conventions.

Overall, this study shows that the results from the Bergen project and the current project largely agree on students' views on cultural knowledge, but the results also show some differences. It is a misunderstanding that students can represent all socio-cultural areas, whatever that may be, within their own country. Such expectations are not of any interest in regard to the development of students' IC. Even if people upon meeting someone from another country for the first time are being mirrored through their "national identity" (Byram, 1997, p. 40), it is not necessarily so that students have the knowledge needed to discuss all aspects. That is, the said areas may have been too abstract to write about and in order to be able to discuss them, more knowledge must be accumulated.

4.2 Assessment in the writing assignment versus the Bergen 'Can Do' Project

In the following, the self-assessment tool developed in the current project will be analysed and compared to the Bergen 'Can Do' self-assessment tool for critical cultural awareness (see *Appendix 3*). The self-assessment tool for the project in question is compiled and based on the results of the essays entitled "What do I or other people do differently?" and revolves around students' perceptions of IC. As in the Bergen project (Hasselgreen, 2003), the assessment was based on CEFR and its "Can Do" statements (see *Appendix 8*), but has also been developed further, which will be explained below.

In the current project, 23 essays written by students aged 16 - 19 were analysed. Their educational and cultural backgrounds differ, as well as their skills in the English language. The information obtained from students' essays has many similarities with the results of the Bergen project, but also some differences. In the Bergen project, 40 essays written by 15-year-old students were analysed. Apart from the difference in the number of students taking part, the differences found in the current project may be due to the students not yet being very proficient in the English language, and therefore may have had difficulties expressing themselves to the extent they would have liked. Their concerns alone, at the beginning of the writing assignment, testifies to this fact. Further evidence is that some of the themes presented to them were not written about. Therefore, in the current project, the self-assessment tool needs to take beginners' knowledge of the English language into account. Simply putting a cross in a box, which is exemplified in Bergen's self-assessment tool, is not sufficient for the group of students in the current project and for that reason the self-assessment needs to be adapted. The adaptation (see *Appendix 7*) will be exemplified below.

Furthermore, when students are to assess their knowledge development, the terms used in the categorization must reflect in positive terms the knowledge that the students have already acquired. This view is not in concordance with the categorization of students' knowledge in the Bergen's self-assessment tool in which "very well, well, quite well" and "badly" (see *Appendix 3*) are to be used. As the word "badly" seems to be a very negative remark to use concerning one's ongoing knowledge development the words "Not yet" (see *Appendix 7*) has been chosen as a more appropriate comment to make.

It is of vital importance that students are cognitively challenged and that they are given the opportunity to express themselves broadly in developing their knowledge in their target language (Cummins, 2006, p. 68). Against this background, the Bergen self-assessment

tool is not fully adequate since the students in the current project also need to develop their linguistic proficiency. It is important that the students evaluate their experiences and assess their learning process by making comments in writing, in order to reflect on and develop their IC. Therefore, the self-assessment in the current project has been supplemented with opportunities for the students to both make reflective comments and answer questions on their views of themselves and others regarding IC. The questions are based on the suggestions presented by AIE (Byram et al., 2009). In this way, students' development of critical cultural awareness will hopefully more clearly be made visible, which, in turn, paves the way for the development of both the self-assessment and the teachers' assessment of students' IC, as well as promote students' language learning.

The approach taken in supplementing the self-assessment tool is based on research. For example, Byram (1997, p. 57) proposes self-evaluation of students' learning process as well as peer response, which complies well with what is stipulated in the Swedish Curriculum for the Compulsory School (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Another view is presented by Witte (2014, p. 295), who claims that in the ESL classroom, it is equally important to learn about culture as it is to learn linguistics. In so doing, students will evolve a greater knowledge of intercultural components; i.e., become more culturally aware and understand more about how to act and communicate as the target language and the milieu in which it is spoken become more familiar and are added to previous knowledge. Also, by taking this step, the self-assessment tool of the current project builds on Byram's (1997) request about taking a holistic view of students' intercultural learning. This thought is also supported by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, pp. 124-125), who call for an "expanded view of assessment [...] to assess language learning as an intercultural endeavor".

The AIE (Byram et al., 2009, p. 3) aims at supporting students in analysing experiences they have had with people with diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, abroad or at home. The questions are asked from different points of view in order to support and develop students' critical cultural awareness. Some are more complex in their issues than others. Consequently, students decide themselves what questions to answer (ibid.). However, teacher guidance may be suggested so that students will become more confident users of self-assessments. In doing so, teachers' assessment will also be in full process (Gibbons, 2015, p. 126). To illustrate how questions may be asked in a self-assessment tool, based on the suggestions above, some examples from the students' essays will now be given.

For example, when pondering on the first theme in the writing assignment; **1. Daily life activities and traditions** (see *Appendix 5*), student 19 wrote: *In Vietnam people eat dogs.*

Not here in Sweden. Other food in Vietnam and other culture. In order to raise awareness of oneself and one's actions and how an action can be perceived by others who come from a different context and a different culture, the student may be asked to tell someone from another cultural background about this experience and then evaluate their communication and reactions. The following questions, displayed in *Figure 6*, may support the student in the self-assessment:

Figure 6. Supporting questions in theme 1.

Concepts of IC	Supporting questions
“ability to acquire new knowledge [...] attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram, 1997, p. 61).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe your communication. - Was it easy for you to discuss and understand each other? Why? Why not?
Attitudes: “willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practises and products in one’s own environment” (ibid., p. 58). Becoming aware of one’s own assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were your reactions? - How do you think someone else would react?

Another example is a text extract from student 6, who, in regard to theme **2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. ‘good manners’, dressing, meeting people)**, chose to write the following: *People in Afghanistan usually do not get on time when you have a meeting or visit with a patient or your mate. And punctuality is not very important in Afghanistan. And it is common in Afghanistan to come late in a visit. But if you get late to school you get an absence.* Here, the questions displayed in *Figure 7* may support the student in his or her self-assessment:

Figure 7. Supporting questions in theme 2.

Concepts of IC	Supporting questions
Skills of interpreting and relating: “ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own” (ibid., p.61).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What similarities and/or differences between your experiences and reactions may be found?

A third example is a text extract from student 15, who in regard to theme 3.

Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny), chose to write the following: *Football makes me not doing bad things, many young people in Poland they are not living with there famliy because thay have been doin so many bad things. Many are in gangs from different countries and make bad things. They don't like africans for example.* When evaluating the communication and reactions made, the student may be supported by the questions displayed in *Figure 8*:

Figure 8. Supporting questions for theme 3.

Concepts of IC	Supporting questions
Attitudes: “willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practises and products in one’s own environment” (Byram, 1997, p. 58). Becoming aware of one’s own assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were your reactions? - How do you think someone else would react?
Critical cultural awareness: “The intercultural speaker is aware of potential conflict between their own and other ideologies and is able to establish common criteria of evaluation of documents or events, and where this is not possible because of incompatibilities in belief and value systems, is able to negotiate agreement on places of conflict and acceptance of difference” (ibid., p. 64).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you find there are differences between you in attitudes or in interacting or in understanding each other, how may these differences be solved? -Do you have any experiences of how to solve problems? - Please give examples of what you did then or what may be done differently. - Sometimes people compare situations in different cultures with similar situations in their own culture. If you did, did it help to understand the situation? - Can you make any conclusions for the future?

Asking students questions in this way may facilitate their learning in that they begin to understand cultural representations in their own as well as in other contexts and countries and may draw parallels and make connections. Learning how to engage and interact appropriately revolves around becoming culturally aware and how to understand one’s own actions as well as others’ in an intercultural setting (Kearney, 2016, p. 35). However, one complication may be incompatible views and values among the students, which may disturb the learning process and is something teachers must learn to come to terms with. Byram (1997, p. 64) stresses the

fact that intercultural education requires more of the teachers as well as of the students than education does on a daily basis. For example, one of the objectives Byram (1997, p. 58) suggests being a criterion for developing the savoir *Attitudes*, involves students' curiosity, openness and readiness towards what they themselves or other students find is different within their cultures. To take on someone else's perspective may seem daunting at first glance, especially if students' views seem to be too wide apart. However, since the development of students' IC is to be promoted over time, their readiness or willingness to adapt will hopefully become easier, step by step within their learning process. Another implication for the language teacher is that students may not have enough knowledge of their own country or culture nor that of others'. It will be too daunting a task for one single teacher to solely build and monitor students' knowledge development, and cooperation with other teachers is therefore vital (ibid., p. 66).

A final comment regarding IC and its place in students' language learning will now conclude this sub-chapter. As students carry with them everything that is part of their cultures, this knowledge must also be possible to use in their intercultural education as well as be included in their assessment. The supplemented self-assessment tool presented above, gives both students and teachers the opportunity to follow students' development. In so doing, they continue to build on the knowledge students have acquired in order for them to become interculturally aware. And, even if Kearney (2016, p. 44) puts forward that more research is required on the connection between the process of students' partaking in various classroom-based cultural encounters and its intercultural outcome, the self-assessment tool presented in this sub-chapter, is hopefully a stepping stone in the endeavour of promoting students' IC.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Each year, students from many cultural backgrounds start school with different knowledge and needs, but also without the necessary qualifications due to different educational backgrounds. This is a great challenge for educators and students alike, but an even greater challenge is that diverse cultural traditions are brought to the classroom by more students than ever before, which may be problematic for both students and for the teacher to handle. It is a greater challenge since school may lack the competence needed to promote education for all. Students may find themselves challenged in a new setting in which values and beliefs differ from those of their own. Hence, it may be more difficult for students to cooperate, to strive for the same direction towards a common goal, in order to individually reach the knowledge requirements and thereby receive the grade pass in their subjects.

Problematic intercultural issues, such as marginalisation and intolerance, are not to be seen as failures of the students, but failure within the education system. School cannot take for granted that students automatically will deal with and adapt to intercultural encounters. To better deal with the challenges faced by students finding themselves in unfamiliar cultural settings, school must promote IC. School is the hub of integration and should therefore endorse the pedagogical approaches needed in promoting IC. A supportive intercultural education that strengthens students' identity from the very start of their schooling is vital as they will encounter unfamiliar social and cultural settings, in school, but also in their future careers.

An implication for the ESL classroom is making intercultural learning visible. A curriculum that draws on research on IC and a pedagogy that incorporates activities such as those described above, ought to permeate the teaching and learning and would benefit all students regardless of their linguistic or cultural background. A curriculum that provides examples of how IC can be integrated into teaching can help teachers create a pedagogy that is permeated by IC and then implement it in the ESL classroom. Students need to be provided with methods that facilitate communication to be able to circumvent or avoid conflicts that may occur due to dysfunctional communication. When students are taught how to communicate interculturally their IC is progressively strengthened.

A well-planned pedagogy offers many affordances for the students and may include speaking activities and reflecting writing as this master thesis suggests. Also, a self-assessment tool as the one described above may enhance students' learning. For beginner learners of the English language to be pushed out of their comfort-zone while still being

supported may benefit them in that their confidence is strengthened as they are taking risks, and in expressing themselves their language skills will develop along with their IC. Therefore, intercultural education must include cognitively demanding assignments that are context-bound for students to succeed.

Culture influences our daily lives and in different areas as well. Culture influences how we identify ourselves and how we conform to society's shared values. As mentioned above, values and opinions are learned in childhood, and later acquired during different stages in life, through the culture that surrounds us. Consequently, we are characterized by the times and environment in which we grow up. In the field of education, ESL students also bring with them values and opinions on what is significant to them in life.

In this master thesis, ESL students have shared and discussed their views and their values when taking part in a writing assignment. They have reflected on what they or others do differently. The information obtained finds that there are similarities to the Bergen 'Can Do' project and some differences. The difference in the number of participants probably had no noticeable effect because the students chose to write about roughly the same themes and in some cases both groups were completely in agreement. Instead, the differences mostly revolve around students' difficulties in expressing themselves on all topics, as they do not yet have the language skills required for the task. The results show that it is much easier for beginner students to express themselves and have opinions on themes that they are familiar with, and what they do on a daily basis, than to write about themes that may be too abstract to them. Consequently, the result is not as extensive as in the Bergen 'Can Do' project.

This master thesis therefore suggests that a writing assignment on themes students carry next to their hearts is an excellent point of departure for promoting IC in an ESL classroom. The themes mentioned involve daily life and traditions, social conventions and values, beliefs and attitudes. Further, a self-assessment tool based on the English Language Portfolio (ELP) may support students in enhancing their critical cultural awareness. Some of the students who were beginner learners and expressed that they may not be able to perform at the level they thought was needed, may be supported by answering questions that aim to enhance their critical cultural awareness as well as their linguistic skills. The questions presented in the AIE (Byram et al., 2009) may be of great help in guiding students further in their learning process.

The role of culture is essential when discussing and defining the concepts of IC. Culture is however not easily explained as it may be defined differently depending on how it is understood by each and one of us. Culture includes both what is visible and what is not visible to us, and students must learn how to adapt to new cultural-bound situations. This is a continuous process that requires intercultural skills. The student group taking part in this investigation have culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Their identities, their worldview and their habitus therefore differ. It is important to remember that the students may never have experienced a situation in which peers from so many different cultures have worked side by side in the classroom. In such a case, it may involve challenges not foreseen. Therefore, further research is proposed to investigate how intercultural education can create the best conditions for students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to develop their IC, and how teachers perceive that IC should be best promoted and implemented in the ESL classroom.

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Appendix 1: Essay Writing Competition

Essay writing competition: ECML

You are invited to write an essay on **cultural know-how**.

Cultural know-how has 4 basic aspects:

- 1 **daily life activities and traditions**
- 2 **social conventions** (e.g. ‘good manners’, normal ways of behaving, dressing, meeting and visiting people etc etc)
- 3 **values, beliefs and attitudes** (e.g. what people are proud of, talk about, worry about, find funny, etc, etc)
- 4 **non-verbal language** (e.g. body language and contact, hand movements, facial expressions, etc, etc).

Before you write, think a bit about what you’ve noticed is different in other cultures, considering all these aspects. Imagine you are writing for pupils coming from other cultures into your own. Tell what might be useful or interesting for them to know. This can include things that do go on in your culture and things that don’t.

Please try to write about 300-500 words (one page, one and a half space) on each of the aspects. Everyone entering will help us, and will get a diploma. The 10 best will get a prize and be put into the ECML website. Prizes will go to essays with lots of ideas for each aspect. Do your best to write good English, but we don’t mind mistakes. Write your name, age, school and country on the essay and give it a title that you like. Please write the essay on computer and save it with your name. Either give your teacher the disk, or e-mail it to angela.hasselgren@eng.uib.no

The deadline is the end of September.

Thank you and good luck!

Appendix 2: The Result of the Bergen 'Can Do' Project

1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)

Everyday family life:

- Meals, varieties of food
- Daily routine, housing, family size, housework
- Pets and other animals
- TV, Internet

School:

- System, class size, grades
- Routines, meals, breaks, uniforms
- Social needs

Leisure time:

- Going out with friends
- Sport, keeping fit
- Holidays

Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):

- Christmas, birthdays
- National festivals and feast days
- Other international feast days
- Youth festivals

Country generally – living conditions:

- Location, demography, occupations, farming activities
- Nature, geography, climate, language
- Urban-rural communities, regional differences
- Social classes

2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. ‘good manners’, dressing, meeting people)

Roles and relationships:

- Boys – girls, men – women
- Younger – older generation
- Family – society
- Family circles and cohesion
- Women’s working situation
- Helping each other

Visiting – hospitality:

- Punctuality, introductions
- Sharing, gifts
- Washing hands, taking off shoes
- Sitting down
- Leaving early

Social occasions:

- Funerals
- Weddings

Expressing emotions:

- Degree of noise, excitability, flamboyance

Going out:

- Smoking and drinking, etiquette and habits

Clothes:

- Dress code - general - formal - for going out

3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)

Concerned with:

- Family life, friends, school success
- Economy, prices, unemployment
- Sport, keeping fit, diseases
- Pollution, housing problems, gossip

Characterisation:

- Friendly, simple, polite
- Sincere, caring, open-minded, tolerant
- Rude, bad-tempered, hypocritical
- Conservative

Religion:

- Church-going

Beliefs:

- Superstitions
- Physical appearance, skin – hair colour

Cultural heritage:

- National history and independence
- Country, nature, population
- National heroes, athletes, sportsmen, singers

National stereotypes and reality:

- Ethnic identities and conflicts
- War, terrorism, emigration

Sense of humour:

- Direct humour, irony
- Telling jokes about other people and nations
- Own and others' misfortune

4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)

Addressing people:

- Degrees of politeness and distance
- Greetings
- Apologising

Striking up conversation:

- Talking to friends and strangers
- Being noisy, quiet, turn-taking, interrupting
- Talking to small children – adults
- Using thank you, please

Sayings, proverbs:

- Animal references (i.e. as stupid as ...)

Emotions – feelings:

- Expressing love, impulsiveness, shyness, embarrassment, taboos

5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)

Body language:

- Shaking hands
- Kissing
- Hugging
- Nodding
- Gesticulating – hand signals

Body contact:

- Touching
- Standing too close, too far

Facial expression:

- Eye contact
- Winking
- Smiling
- Crying
- Showing anger.

Appendix 3: The Bergen 'Can Do' Project Blueprint for a Self-Assessment Tool for Intercultural Awareness

1. Daily life activities and traditions	Very well	Well	Quite well	badly
I am familiar with daily life topics like family, school, sport, music, film, media, hobbies, spare time activities, holidays, festivals, traditions				
I can express myself on daily life topics				
I know about differences and similarities in daily life situations between my own country and countries where the foreign language is used				
I can express myself on topics of personal interest like education and job situation, as well as social and cultural issues, environmental and minority questions and human rights in own country to countries where the foreign language is used				

2. Social conventions	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of ways of behaving in daily life situations concerning meals, dress code and taboos etc.				
I can manage traditional ways of behaving when meeting and visiting people.				
I can accept and show politeness and hospitality in meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used				
I have learned more about myself and my country when meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used				

3. Values, beliefs and attitudes	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of basic features of religion, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language.				
I can use what I know about topics as arts and politics of the country of the foreign language to learn more.				
I can use what I know about politics, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language to adjust what I say and do.				
I can compare the culture of the foreign language to my own country's and get to a personal standing point.				
I can enjoy the culture of the foreign language and benefit personally and in a broader social context.				

4. Verbal communication	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I can greet other persons in formal as well as informal situations.				
I can express myself when it is adequate to be polite, friendly or caring.				
I can excuse myself when I have made mistakes.				
I can make a short speech at celebrations.				

5. Non-verbal communication	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of how mimics and body language can facilitate my understanding of daily life situations in the foreign language.				
I can make myself better understood by using gestures like pointing and shaking hands and body language.				
I can understand the humour in the foreign language and use a humorous issue as a means of communication.				

Appendix 4: Writing Assignment

What do I or other people do differently?

You are invited to write an essay on **cultural know-how**.

Cultural know-how has 4 basic aspects:

1. **daily life activities and traditions**
2. **social conventions** (e.g. 'good manners', normal ways of behaving, dressing, meeting and visiting people etc etc)
3. **values, beliefs and attitudes** (e.g. what people are proud of, talk about, worry about, find funny, etc, etc)
4. **non-verbal language** (e.g. body language and contact, hand movements, facial expressions, etc, etc).

Before you write, think a bit about what you've noticed is **different in other cultures** considering all these aspects and write this down in your notebook or make a mindmap. Imagine you are writing for pupils coming from other cultures into your own. Tell what might be useful or interesting for them to know. This can include things that do go on in your culture and things that don't.

Please try to write about 150-300 words (one and a half space) on each of the aspects. Do your best to write good English, but don't worry about mistakes. Remember to ask your teacher for help when you wonder about something.



Best of luck!

Ulrika

Appendix 5: Students' perceptions regarding their cultural know-how: "What do I or other people do differently?"

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 1	<p><i>In my own contry girls don't always go to school. In sweden it's other traditions. Another thing that is different is Eid. We celebrate Eid but we must go to school that day in Sweden. Eid is very importnat and maybe most important in our religion so we should have a holiday like Swedish Christmas if you know what I mean</i></p> <p><i>I like to talk about music. It's a big interest and I sing every day. It makes me happy. Music is good and everybody need music in our lifes. Every country has music for that country. I sing with my sister.</i></p> <p><i>I cut my hair and have jeans on. In my own country that's not ok. If I had jeans on in my own country people should laugh and be angry. In Sweden it's ok to dress like this. I can walk around as much as I want to here in sweden. I can talk to girls and boys and it's not ok in my own country. We are very different there. Boys and girls are not the same rules for and they can't do the same things.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p>	<p><i>School:</i> - System</p> <p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Singing¹</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys – girls, men – women - Family – society</p>

¹ Singing is not listed in Hasselgreen's research (my comment)

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 2	<p><i>We muslims have a holiday that we can celebrate, there are three holidays and they are like "Eid" but it is our biggest holiday it is like christmas but it is not on the same time. [...] Eid is on the sommer after what we call the holy month Ramadan Fasting month). The Ramadan is important for us muslims because of it is one of the important five steps in Islam. We eat very nice food when it's eid and I would welcome other people to eat with me and my family.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to take part in Happy New Years event because it seems a cool time to party and every one out at that time will celebrate that event. next year I will have an apartment for myself so then I can celbrate, and my parents don't' decide what I can do, like in Somalia.</i></p> <p><i>Something else that is different in Sweden is how people work. In Somalia wifes don't work but here in Sweden they work. I think it's good and when I have a wife and a family she will work too. It's like this in Sweden and it's good. I like it! This relationship. Not like in Somalia, oh no.</i></p> <p><i>The students who may come to Sweden from other countires are I guess looking forward to know more about our traditions or our costumts. That is good for us and for them to know more about each other's traditions, culture or like if only my family celebrate. Important for me to talk about will then be religion. I'm proud to be a muslim ang goint to the mosqu is important and it's possible here in my country Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>In Sweden you can have any religion. That is not possible everywhere for sure. I don't go to church because I am muslim so that means i can not celebrate Christmas. Christians are not many in Somalia, it's very difficult there.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i> - Eid, National festivals and feast days</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys - girls, - men – women - Younger – older generation - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Women's working situation</p> <p><i>Religion:</i> - Church-going/ going to the mosque</p> <p><i>Characterisation:</i> - tolerant</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 3	<p><i>There is one tradition in Sweden that i think is a little extra speciel and that is Midsummer.I think people in other countries would find Midsummer a very strange tratidion because we dance and jump in circles around the midsummer tree. What i know we only celebrate this tradition in Sweden and other countries just dont understand the meaning of celebrating Midsummer. To celebrate Midsummer we gather the whole family and eat a nice dinner togheter, Around 5 PM we dance around this thing that looks like a midsummer tree.</i></p> <p><i>In Sweden we tall jokes about people in Norway. I don't know a joke about another country.</i></p> <p><i>One thing that is typical Swedish is that people don't talk to people on the way to work for example. Maybe other people talk more and are more social. I think so anyway.</i></p> <p><i>We don't use body language I think. I don't think we use gestures like they do in other countries.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>Festivities:</i> - National festivals and feast days</p> <p><i>Sense of humour:</i> - Telling jokes about other people and nations</p> <p><i>Striking up conversation:</i> - Talking to friends and strangers</p> <p><i>Body Language:</i> - Gesticulating - hand signals</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 4	<p><i>If we could find a hall to celebrate an Somali cultural evening with dresses, dance, music and food from Somalia my country I would like to show someone from sweden and maybe another culture what food we eat. This could be a lot of fun and will increase the knowledge and understanding about us. Important for me is to tell about my life. Swedish people don't know much about somali people.</i></p> <p><i>In my spare time I like to stay at home, cooking for my family, but in the evenings I like going to the gym. Sometimes I like to do different things with my friends for exempel hang out and watch a movie together. We go to the cinema to watch a Swedish film. This would give an opportunity to see and exprience Swedish culture and environment. I mostly see american films.</i></p> <p><i>I believe that telling about and discussing would give us an opportunity to share what it looks like in Somalai and maybe learn some words.. so many people live in Somalai. It's a beautiful country and I miss my country and the sun.</i></p> <p><i>In different countries our world is unhappy today. By this I mean that in my experience many people can mislead each other and heart each other. terrorists are hurting people and that's why I'm in Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>It does not have to be so, because we are all a humans and our different cultures and the colour of our skin should not matter. [...] To me it would be a great experience to tell a foreigner about how we in sweden think and since we come from different countries, and we have different views we can have international understanding.</i></p> <p><i>I think it would be very interesting to be able discuss history and religion, sweden has a different history because we are independance for many years. 'it's wr in somalia so this is sad. The countries are different in many ways. It would be really meaningful to tell Swedish people and other people from other countries about Somalia becaause he get a deeper understanding for us. [...] It wolud be good to share our different plilosophies, ideas and beliefs which affect our every day lives. This can helps us to learn from each other and how we can learn from history.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i> - National feast days</p> <p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Going out with friends - Sport, keeping fit</p> <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i> - Location, demography, - Nature, geography, climate, language</p> <p><i>National stereotypes and reality:</i> - Ethnic identities and conflicts - War, terrorism, emigration</p> <p><i>Beliefs:</i> - Skin colour</p> <p><i>Cultural heritage:</i> - National history and independence</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 5	<p><i>I haven't got many Swedish "Swedish" friends, like they are born here in a Swedish family. But I have many many friends. Big family too and many brothers and sisters and cousins and ... so Lebanon families are bigger than Swedish families I think.</i></p> <p><i>Lebanon students have longer school days then we have here in Sweden. School is also more strict there. Bigger classes too.</i></p> <p><i>Here in sweden it's ok to go out late in the evening but in Lebanon this wouldn't be ok because girls should stay at home.</i></p> <p><i>My mother works here and my older sister too but in Lebanon they don't have to work if they are married.</i></p> <p><i>We like to kiss when we meet but that is not the Swedish way.! I don't know but I think it's ok.I think students talk more too. Discuss maybe more.</i></p> <p><i>In Sweden in the students in my class are more shy, I think. Maybe it's because Swedish people are not so outgoing if you know what I mean?</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family : life:</i> - family size</p> <p><i>School:</i> - System, class size</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys – girls, men – women, - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Women's working situation</p> <p><i>Addressing people:</i> - Greetings</p> <p><i>Emotions - feelings:</i> - Shyness</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 6	<p><i>In Afghanistan we do not have any special clothes for school and we wear usually clothes when we go to school, but we can say that afghanistan and sweden have the same lag in schools. I mean we can use any clothes we want, when we go to school. I think it's a little different from other countries, for example if you are a student in Iran, you have to take special clothes when you go to school. But in Afghanistan boys and girls may not be in a class, boys have a special class and girls have another class for themselves.</i></p> <p><i>People in Afghanistan usually do not get on time when you have a meeting or visit with a patient or your mate. And punctuality is not very important in Afghanistan. And it is common in Afghanistan to come late in a visit. But if you get late to school you get an absence.</i></p> <p><i>But in Afghanistan, people are very religious, and they usually go to mosque every evening to pray to God. The muslim people usually pray five times a day and it is in the morning, lunch, after dinner, evening and at night. Religion is very important in Afghanistan, if you have traveled some time to Afghanistan, say nothing about their faith, otherwise they will kill you. it was two years since Muslims killed a girl because she said something badly about Muslims, Muslims are very dangerous people in the world I think.</i></p> <p><i>In Afghanistan you are greeted with hands, and it is very common. But they also shake their hands very much when they talk to each other. But girls in afghanistan like to kiss there cheek when they are greeting. I think it's not the same culture as Sweden, here in Sweden people usually do not greet with their hands but in Afghanistan, when people are going to greet they use their hands very much.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>School:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System - Routine - Uniforms <p><i>Visiting, hospitality:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Punctuality <p><i>Religion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church-going <p><i>National stereotypes and reality:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnic identities and conflicts <p><i>Body language:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shaking hands - Kissing - Gesticulating

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 7	<p><i>In sweden many people live alone.</i></p> <p><i>It is diffeicult for old people coming from Syria now to sweden because everything is changing. The countries are different. Language is difficult for old people. Writing in a new language too. Syria have much more people and Sweden is a small nation. Syrian people speak Arabic and only Arabic. Swedish people know English and speak really good english.</i></p> <p><i>I think that all Syrians want to have a good relation with their freinds and they want to have many people around them so freindship is a very important thing.</i></p> <p><i>I think people in Syria are more polite. I always have been polite at home, school and with relatives. In my school everybody isn't polite and it's not nice i think. Maybe syrian people are more polite.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family size, <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location, demography, occupations - Nature, geography, climate, language <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion <p><i>Characterisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friendly, polite
Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 8	<p><i>So how can we make it change you may ask, so i think if we start in the early years of school to talk about being a hbtq+ person then the awarness gets spread and the children are growing up with the fact that it is okey to be who you are. And the grown ups needs to understand too and educate theirselves to help us change this problem.</i></p> <p><i>Values and beliefs and traditions around the world arn't the same. Todays sociaty are very rough to the people that are diffrent for example if you are gay then you most likely have been called faggot and other disturbing words and I want to change that, I want teens to feel exepted and safe in our sociaty no matter what.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes people don't say things but their faces wil or how they act. In Sweden it's mor accepted to be a gay but in other countries they can kill you.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living onditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g.body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>School:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System <p><i>Characterisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rude, bad-tempered, hypocritical - Conservative <p><i>Facial expression:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eye contact - Showing anger.

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 9	<p><i>Last I would like to say that in Sweden everybody has a house to live in and it's not so poor as in Somalia.</i></p> <p><i>One thing thats definitelu different is the sunshine. In Sweden it's dark many months and we miss the sun really bad. And it's very hot in Somalia and in sweden it will never be so hot.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to suggest three things that dissturbe me very much in Sweden and in families and people get sick. The first thing is Drug taking,the second Alcohol drinking and the third one is Smoking. This is not a traditoin in Somalia and its forbidden, it's haram. In swedden there are different attitudes. Drug taking is forbidden but you help people who take drugs. In Somalia people don't get help from goverment like here.</i></p> <p><i>Many people are poor in Somalia and don't work. That's all i can remember. thank you.</i></p> <p><i>When people meet in sweden they shake hands. Women and men. In Somalia women don't do that. You also hug each other. Women and men hug but they can't do that in Somalia.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Housing</p> <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i> - Nature, climate</p> <p><i>Concerned with:</i> - Family life - Keeping fit, diseases - Governmental support²</p> <p><i>Concerned with:</i> - Economy, prices, unemployment</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> - Shaking hands - Hugging</p>

² Governmental support is not listed in Hasselgreen's research (my comment)

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 10	<p><i>I'm from syrian but i live in sweden becuase of war in my country, maybe i could talk to somone about that. And about my country. A beautiful sunny country. And about my language.</i></p> <p><i>I'm studying in the highschool now. Actaully in summer i want work to earn some money for my future than i will rusame my study and be a dactor in future and i think it is littile difficulte to be but i will try hard for my future. woman can't study in all countries but in sweden thy can. This is differnet.</i></p> <p><i>In Syria teenagers can do more things now and go out and eat and so but is differnet in sweden is more free. Girsl clothes are different and more things.</i></p> <p><i>In Syria people talk more to people but in sweden people don't say so much. Maybe is traditions. Maybe it change in future.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location, - Nature, geography, climate, language <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's working situation <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boys - girls <p><i>Striking up conversation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talking to friends and strangers - Being quiet
Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 11	<p><i>[...] [W]hen our parents were teens they didn't know half of the things we know now, there are a lot of things we've learnt in a young age that can be good or bad. [...]</i></p> <p><i>[Y]ou'll see 8 or 9 year old with a newer phone than you and that's so shocking, it's not shocking because they have newer phones, it's shocking because there are parents that are actually allowing this. So imagine how the teenagers now will be like when they're parents in the future. I think it's stricter in Somalia than Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>I think Swedish people should focus more on their health and go to the gym. This generation we live in has taken tobacco and drinking alcohol to another level, nowadays you'll see teens my age smoking like it's a normal thing because the society has gotten used to it, and that's bad and I worry about it, I do. That's different from my upbringing in Somalia. It's gonna be a health problem here in Sweden if it doesn't change.</i></p> <p><i>Another thing that is different between being young and an older generation is social media. We can talk about good manners or not here. We should focus on the time we're</i></p>	<p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign</p>	<p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Younger – older generation - Family – society <p><i>Concerned with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport, keeping fit, diseases <p><i>Concerned with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family life

	<p>wasting on social media because it is affecting our real lives in the real world, yes social media is a completely different world from the one we live in, that's just my opinion though. Social media plays a BIG part in our lives. It has a good side and a bad one, you should just know the differences because social media has been the reason a lot of people suffer from depression and also the reason people get anxiety. Swedish grownups don't realize how dangerous it is for their children. It's bad manners to me. maybe I'm not as positive as Swedish people.</p>	<p>language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p>Characterisation: - Sincere, caring, open-minded, tolerant</p>
Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 12	<p><i>My parents live in the same house here but it's not Swedish. Swedish old people don't live together with children like that.</i></p> <p><i>I like to go out with my friends and family I don't like to sit home and do nothing. This is different and in my old country I was sitting much at home because I'm a girl. This is different in Sweden. My friends are everything for me I support them if they need me I am ready to do everything for them.</i></p> <p><i>In my old country mum was home but now she works.</i></p> <p><i>In Sweden boys and girls hug but this is REALLY Swedish.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Housing, family size</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys - girls - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Women's working situation</p> <p><i>Addressing people:</i> - Greetings</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 13	<p><i>If you don't celebrate christmas for example I think people would find Swedish Christmas quite odd. Especially the wierd christmas foods that we have for example here In Sweden, we always have different kinds of pickled fish, potatoes, wierd seasonal sausages etc, and also people may not understand why we give away presents to our children or even eachother. Because even I myself that celebrate this tradition have problems understanding some of the wierd traditions that have carried on through the years.</i></p> <p><i>I think that traditions and customs are important to everyone. It doesn't matter If It's your birthday or If you're celebrating a special holiday like christmas or easter for example. The point of It all Is to be together with your family and friends during the special events, that Is what makes It become a holiday to begin with.</i></p> <p><i>If your all gathered together It's always going to be a fun and exciting time. Visiting family I mean. But If you spend the holidays by yourself It's never going to be the same thing as being with your family. This is for sure the same around the world but it would be interesting to know if someone not born in sweden agree with me.</i></p> <p><i>The one thing that I find perticularly wierd about the christmas that we celebrate here In Sweden, Is that each and every single year we sit down together and watch the exact same cartoon over and over again. Repeating the process each year, I've never understood this part of the season because we've already watched the cartoon 300 times. [...] I really can't get my head around this. It seems even extremely odd to me. Old and young - it doesn't matter if you never watch TV any other time together in your family. So someone that hasn't celebrated christmas will probably agree with me and wonder why we watch the same movie each year. And with for example grandma who can't hear ok.</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, and another thing - why do Swedish people go to church once a year - only at christmas?</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i> - Christmas</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Younger – older generation - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion</p> <p><i>Visiting – hospitality:</i> - Sharing</p> <p><i>Concerned with:</i> - Family life</p> <p><i>Characterisation:</i> - Conservative</p> <p><i>Religion:</i> - Church-going</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 14	<p><i>Swedish boys play fotball and we do in Afghanistan also. Sport is good for me. I like fotball.</i></p> <p><i>Something differnt in Afghanistan and Sweden is people in afghanistan dress not like Swedish people. Men and me also dress not always in jeans.</i></p> <p><i>Food is also not the same. i eat sometimes when I sit on the floor. In sweden people sit at table only.</i></p> <p><i>In Afghanistan people are very nice very [kind]. Swedish people are also very nice.</i></p> <p><i>Gestures I think people in afghanistan have more gestures and it's not so many gestures here in Sweden.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Sport, keeping fit</p> <p><i>Clothes:</i> Dress code - general</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Family – society</p> <p><i>Characterisation:</i> - Friendly, caring</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> - Gesticulating – hand signals</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 15	<p><i>i am seventhin (17) years old and In my free time i play football. I did in Poland too. Sports is fantastic and very important for me and for everyone if you want to live a good healthy life.</i></p> <p><i>all teenagers want to be with friends after school. It's the same thing in every country. Maybe it was not so free in Poland as here in Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>Also school is not so strict in Sweden, I like it here.</i></p> <p><i>Football makes me not doing bad things, many young people in Poland they are not living with there famliy because thay have been doin so many bad things. Many are in gangs from different countries and make bad things. They don't like africans for example.</i></p> <p><i>Polish people use more gestures than Swedish people, they talk more with the body, Swedish people dont use gestures maybe so much.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)</p>	<p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Sport, keeping fit</p> <p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Going out with friends</p> <p><i>School:</i> - System</p> <p><i>National stereotypes and reality:</i> - Ethnic identities and conflicts</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> - Gesticulating – hand signals</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 16	<p><i>Food is not same. I like food in Lebanon. But Swedish food is ok. In Lebanon girls help to cook. My Swedish friend doesn't help at home. In Lebanon girls must help. I like to cook food. In Lebanon I live with mother, father, mother's mother yes everybody big family. Not in Sweden. Big families in Lebanon but not in Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>School in Lebanon is difficult and only little difficult here in Sweden. Smoking is more in Lebanon. All smoke.</i></p> <p><i>It's hot in Lebanon not here.</i></p> <p><i>I dance and I sing and feast with my family but Swedish people don't. My Swedish friends don't.</i></p> <p><i>We also kiss when I see a friend and Swedish people don't.</i></p> <p><i>I think people in Lebanon talk more and Swedish people don't talk so much.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Meals, varieties of food, family size, housework</p> <p><i>School:</i> - System</p> <p><i>Country generally - living conditions:</i> - climate</p> <p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i> - Sing and dance with family³</p> <p><i>Addressing people:</i> - Greetings</p> <p><i>Striking up conversation:</i> - Talking to friends and strangers</p>

³ Singing and dancing within one's family is not listed in Hasselgreen's research (my comment)

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 17	<p><i>In Turkey a man and a woman gonna marry if they have a baby. This is different here in Swedens culture.</i></p> <p><i>Lifestyle, everyone have a different lifestyle, and if you know how to help and accept peoples lifestyle and how they liv, you gona know how people think and wha they're like, and all the people gona like you because they finde someone that trust them. This was important for me in my home country Turkey an it's importan now too. But maybe it's a little differnet here and I think Turkish people don't accept every lifestyle. Sweden accept more.</i></p> <p><i>More people live in Turkey too. Thats all i know.</i></p> <p><i>I'm a cracy boy , because i like to try new things and travel , have a funny day. And i love to do people happy i juste like it. Maybe I'm more cracy than swedish boys they're not so cracy i think. I'm turkish see?I try to think whit a new minde a new and defferent idee, We turkish don't be scereed or something like that. swedish people maybe are more scereed. Life is newewery day and i wordon't miss it.</i></p>	<p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boys – girls, men – women - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion <p><i>Characterisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friendly, - Sincere, caring, open-minded, tolerant <p><i>Cultural heritage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country, nature, population <p><i>Emotions – feelings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressing fear⁴, impulsiveness

⁴ Expressing fear towards someone or towards doing something new is not listed in Hasselgreen's research (my comment)

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 18	<p><i>In Sweden families eat together often than people in Somalia because i think it's something like tradition and that Swedish like to do that but Somali people doesn't always do that they eat alone in a different place inside their home. My father did.</i></p> <p><i>Swedish people like to have pets in their homes but somalian people 90% dont like to have pets in their homes.</i></p> <p><i>Somalia is located in the horn of africa. It is bordered by Ethiopia to the west, Djibouti to the northwest, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east, and Kenya to the southwest Climatically, hot conditions prevail year-round, with periodic monsoon winds and irregular rainfall. Which mean it doesn't rain very often and there is a lot of humidity. The climate of Sweden is divided into four season Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn. That's different.</i></p> <p><i>99.8% of Somalia's population is Muslim. So that means Somalia have one religion and that is Islam. But in Sweden there are alot of different religions inside the country some of them are Islam, Kristen, Buddhism, hinduism, some doesn't have religion at all and it is a religion free country that means you can have whatever religion you like.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Meals, varieties of food</p> <p>- Pets and other animals</p> <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i> - Climate</p> <p><i>Religion:</i> - Church-going</p> <p><i>Characterisation:</i> - Open-minded, tolerant</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 19	<p><i>In Vietnam you can found many streetfood every were. But you can't found it in Sweden, you must going to restaurant. In Vietnam people eat dogs. Not here in Sweden. Other food in Vietnam and other culture.</i></p> <p><i>But school in Sweden are much better than Vietnam. In Vietnam teacher they can give you some smash if you don't do what they say or coming late to school. Children in Vietnam they have many book in our bag if they coming to school. I like to live in Sweden more then Vietnam. When school finished children study in Vietnam but not so much hemwork in Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>I'm lived in Vietnam before and this don't like to live in Sweden. In Vietnam when you going out from you house you can found many people in the gate. Not in Sweden. Daily life is different. It's hot in Vietnam and people are more out and not at home so much. Children are more out. Play more in the gate.</i></p> <p><i>Maybe swedish people travel more. My friends family traveld to Spain.</i></p> <p><i>Old people have more respect in Vietnam. Old people stay with family. My family too.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meals, varieties of food - Pets and other animals <p><i>School:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System, - Routines <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location, demography - Climate <p><i>Leisure time:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holidays <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Younger – older generation

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 20	<p><i>families can be big</i></p> <p><i>Nature is also different in Thailand. it's very hot and natur looks different. I'm very cold in winter here in Sweden and this is different.</i></p> <p><i>One of my favorites tradition that's mean much to me is who every year we do. In this tradition we have to be 24 hours in the beach. Almost everyone takes something to drink and a Bqq for grill some meat and some chicken. 12 a clock all the people needs to take a bath for at least one minute and then jump a rope whos on fire.</i></p> <p><i>This tradition is very important for us because everyone is together and nobody has to work and its just having fun the whole day on the beach.</i></p> <p><i>The most i like form this tradition is that some people who probably dont have money for some meat and chicken, the people invite them to eat in a group so people dont feel bad. I don't think this happens in sweden?</i></p> <p><i>family is also very important. and older family members live with grandchildren. More important with family in Thailand I think.</i></p> <p><i>I have heard about 1 more tradition that Spain do that i really hate and i would never be ther to see it that is hurting a bull with swords to death and letting the bull suffer bleeding and then they cut the head off and hang it on a wall. I disagree with this tradition and hopet Spain is fighting for take it off and never do it again. Swedish people must think spanish people are totally crazy! IN sweden we don't hurt animals.</i></p> <p><i>I think thai people are more polite than swedesh people</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p> <p>4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Family size</p> <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i> - Demography, - Nature</p> <p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i> - National festivals and feast days</p> <p><i>Leisure time:</i> - Going out with friends - Holidays</p> <p><i>Country generally – living conditions:</i> - Social classes</p> <p>- Helping each other</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion</p> <p><i>National stereotypes and reality:</i> - Ethnic identities</p> <p><i>Addressing people:</i> - Degrees of politeness and distance</p>

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 21	<p><i>There are a lot of traditions in the world, and many celebrates different traditions. Some traditions are important to me because it can describe who you are. The tradition can tell you how it is to live in different ways. We have different traditions in Syria and Sweden. I don't know the names but it's different. We dance and eat nice food.</i></p> <p><i>Also in school it's differnt. In Syria we don't write kōnika and argument and we read a lot of poetry. we learn poetry and write a lot of poetry too. We write with pens and not so much with computers.</i></p> <p><i>A thing I can see is different from Syria here in Sweden is food. In Syria we have many more spices in our food and I use my hands more than Swedish people do when they eat.</i></p> <p><i>If I should use my hands when I eat my lunch in School people would think I'm crazy!</i></p> <p><i>Also, because we live with our grandmas and grandfathers in the same house in Syria I think I show more respect to older people than I can see teenagers in Sweden do. My family is very close and my grandmother takes care of me in Syria. This tradition isn't here in Sweden.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to me because tradition brings love into the society. To see people united makes me happy. Living in Syria you think more about being a muslim than you do here in Sweden. There is a difference I think. Sweden is not so religious and people don't go to their churches.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people</p> <p>3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)</p>	<p><i>Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National festivals and feast days - Other international feast days <p><i>School:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System, - Routines <p><i>Everyday family life:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meals, varieties of food <p><i>Going out:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Etiquette and habits <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Younger – older generation - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion - Helping each other <p><i>Religion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Church-going

Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 22	<p><i>Sweden has inspired to me to take my education more seriously so I can gain much knowledge. I can spread what I can to the people I know. No one should be denied for the right education, discriminated going to school and required here until they finish high school. When I was in my own country we had not the same situation. I could not have the same kind of education as boys I mean mostly of our teachers care more about boys' future always they had a good thing than us.</i></p> <p><i>Dressing in Sweden is different. Most for girls. In Sweden girls have jeans and blouses and show their bodies and show their hair. I would never do that because of my religion but other Muslim girls do that. Because they live in Sweden. It's other attitudes. In Somalia our parents give more respect for men.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p>	<p><i>School:</i> - System</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys – girls, men – women - Family – society- - Family circles and cohesion</p>
Students	Text excerpts	Themes (1-5)	Specific part of theme
Student 23	<p><i>In Sweden we have other traditions about eating. In Sweden it's important to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner. In other countries they don't eat breakfast like we do. In films for example you can see that coffee goes with breakfast sometimes. In my family we always eat breakfast together. Something my friends think is funny is bingo. My brother and I play football and we sell bingo and we watch TV together with my family every weekend and hope to win something. My friends in class think this is weird but I guess it's new to them and they don't do that in their countries. But I know they like watching TV of course. But not the same programme, that's different here and in other cultures.</i></p> <p><i>Attitudes are different in different countries I think. I want to discuss this because I've noticed a difference and in Sweden we have other attitudes I think. Because many people from Sweden actually don't care about our attitude to our friends, families, relatives, neighbours, and especially strangers as they do in other countries. Maybe we could learn to be more respectful like people from other cultures are.</i></p>	<p>1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)</p> <p>2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. 'good manners', dressing, meeting people)</p>	<p><i>Everyday family life:</i> - Meals, varieties of food - Daily routine, - TV</p> <p><i>Roles and relationships:</i> - Boys – girls, men – women - Younger – older generation - Family – society - Family circles and cohesion - Helping each other</p>

Appendix 6: The Result of the Writing Assignment “What do I or other people do differently?”

1. Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)

Everyday family life:

- Meals, varieties of food
- Daily routine, housing, family size, housework
- Pets and other animals
- TV

School:

- System, class size
- Routines, uniforms

Leisure time:

- Going out with friends
- Sport, keeping fit
- Holidays
- Singing

Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):

- Christmas
- National festivals and feast days
- Sing and dance with the family

Country generally – living conditions:

- Location, demography, occupations
- Nature, geography, climate, language
- Social classes

2. Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. ‘good manners’, dressing, meeting people)

Roles and relationships:

- Boys – girls, men – women
- Younger – older generation
- Family – society
- Family circles and cohesion
- Women’s working situation
- Helping each other

Visiting – hospitality:

- Punctuality
- Sharing, gifts

Appearance:

- Dressing

Going out:

- Table manners

3. Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)

Concerned with:

- Family life
- Economy, prices, unemployment
- Keeping fit, diseases
- Governmental support

Characterisation:

- Friendly, polite
- Sincere, caring, open-minded, tolerant
- Rude, bad-tempered, hypocritical
- Conservative

Religion:

- Church - going
- Going to the mosque

Beliefs:

- Skin colour

Cultural heritage:

- National history and independence
- Country, nature, population

National stereotypes and reality:

- Ethnic identities and conflicts
- War, terrorism, emigration

Sense of humour:

- Telling jokes about other people and nations

4. Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)

Addressing people:

- Degrees of politeness and distance
- Greetings

Striking up conversation:

- Talking to friends and strangers

Emotions – feelings:

- Shyness
- Expressing fear

5. Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)

Body language:

- Shaking hands
- Kissing
- Hugging
- Gesticulating – hand signals

Facial expression:

- Eye contact
- Showing anger.

Appendix 7: Blueprint for a Self-Assessment Tool for Critical cultural awareness

1. Daily life activities and traditions	Very well	Well	Quite well	Not yet!
I am familiar with daily life topics like family, school, sport, music, film, media, hobbies, spare time activities, holidays, festivals, traditions.				
I can express myself on daily life topics.				
I know about differences and similarities in daily life situations between my own country and countries where the foreign language is used.				
I can express myself on topics of personal interest like education and job situation, as well as social and cultural issues, environmental and minority questions and human rights in own country to countries where the foreign language is used.				
2. Social conventions				
I am aware of ways of behaving in daily life situations concerning meals, dress code and taboos etc.				
I can manage traditional ways of behaving when meeting and visiting people.				
I can accept and show politeness and hospitality in meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used.				
I have learned more about myself and my country when meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used.				
3. Values, beliefs and attitudes				
I am aware of basic features of religion, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language.				
I can use what I know about topics as arts and politics of the country of the foreign language to learn more.				
I can use what I know about politics, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language to adjust what I say and do.				
I can compare the culture of the foreign language to my own country's and get to a personal standing point.				
I can enjoy the culture of the foreign language and benefit personally and in a broader social context.				

4. Verbal communication	Very well	Well	Quite well	Not yet!
I can greet other persons in formal as well as informal situations.				
I can express myself when it is adequate to be polite, friendly or caring.				
I can excuse myself when I have made mistakes.				
I can make a short speech at celebrations.				
5. Non-verbal communication				
I am aware of how mimics and body language can facilitate my understanding of daily life situations in the foreign language.				
I can make myself better understood by using gestures like pointing and shaking hands and body language.				
I can understand the humour in the foreign language and use a humorous issue as a means of communication.				

Concepts of IC	Supporting questions	Students' reflections and answers
“Ability to acquire new knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram, 1997, p. 61).	- Describe your communication. - Was it easy for you to discuss and understand each other? Why? Why not?	
Attitudes: “willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practises and products in one’s own environment” (ibid., p. 58). Becoming aware of one’s own assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices.	- What were your reactions? - How do you think someone else would react?	
Skills of interpreting and relating, discovering and interacting: “ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate to documents or events from one’s own” (ibid., p.61).	- What similarities and/or differences between your experiences and reactions may be found?	
Cultural awareness: “The intercultural speaker is aware of potential conflict between their own and other ideologies and is able to establish common criteria of evaluation or documents of events, and where this is not possible because of incompatibilities in belief and value systems, is able to negotiate agreement on places of conflict and acceptance of difference” (ibid., p. 64).	- If you find there are differences between you in attitudes or in interacting or in understanding each other, how may these differences be solved? -Do you have any experiences of how to solve problems? - Please give examples of what you did then or what may be done differently. - Sometimes people compare situations in different cultures with similar situations in their own culture. If you did, did it help to understand the situation? - Can you make any conclusions for the future?	

Appendix 8: Self-Assessment Grid (CEFR)

	A1	A2
Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.
Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.
Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.

	B1	B2
Listening	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
Reading	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.
Spoken interaction	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.
Spoken production	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Writing	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

	C1	C2
Listening	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Reading	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
Spoken interaction	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
Spoken production	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
Writing	I can express myself in clear, well structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Reflektionsnotat

If I were to start this project all over again, I would introduce the concept of culture and have students discuss it for a couple of more lessons. I would also introduce students to the questions in the AIE before they start writing, since I firmly believe that all students, but especially those who are concerned about their writing skills, may be better supported by using some of the questions.

I also suggest that the result of the investigation would be presented to and discussed with the student group, in that a promotion of IC is to be continued. Such a procedure would support students' and teachers' work with IC in the near future, but also in a longer perspective. In doing so, the promotion of IC is regarded as an on-going process instead of a one-time event.

Some students were concerned about not being able to express themselves in a way that would present a basis for the research. Despite managing to accomplish the assignment, a couple of students may have found it a bit too challenging, as they were not able to write even near the number of words we agreed on. However, seeing that they were able to present their thoughts in writing and complete the assignment has also been a rewarding experience for them, which may boost their confidence and enhance their knowledge and writing skills. In the light of this, a longer introduction is needed, in which vocabulary building and further reflective writing are focused on before the actual assignment takes off.

Another idea I had was that it would be interesting to have the students answering questions around 6 months after having taken part in the research. They could, for example, be asked to do a think-aloud in class, and then do some reflective writing based on the following questions: *Do you think you are more conscious of IC on a daily basis than before?*, *Do you consider yourself to have become more aware of how to cooperate in intercultural encounters?*, *What do you think is most important to you in developing your IC?*. It would also be great fun to cooperate on the promotion of IC with other colleagues in cross-disciplinary activities. We will see what happens!

Overall, I am very content with how the work with the master thesis has evolved. It has really been a great learning process for me. Thank you!

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