

MASTEROPPGAVE

THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORWAY

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Abstract

The main goal of this thesis is to find out how English teachers in Norwegian lower secondary schools interpret the intercultural dimension in the national curriculum, and if and how this is implemented into their own teaching. My belief is that the intercultural dimension is implemented, however that to which degree to a large extent is dependent on the teacher.

This study is a follow up of my findings in my paper in Project and Method where I researched the same topic in a much smaller scale; in one school only. This time I have included and interviewed English teachers from the whole country hoping to find indicators that might shed some light on if and how the intercultural dimension is implemented in English teaching in lower secondary schools in Norway.

The method applied is a web based survey sent out to schools in Norway, asking the English teachers to answer my survey. The questions first and foremost ask about attitudes and behaviours among the teachers when it comes to the intercultural dimension.

The findings show that the intercultural dimension is indeed implemented in schools in Norway. However, they also indicate that I am correct in my belief that it is very much dependent on the teacher.

My study does not represent the majority of English teachers in Norway, and the results can therefore not be generalized to all schools. It does however give some indicators that I humbly believe provide an insight into the current situation regarding the implementation of the intercultural dimension in our schools.

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1 Introduction

The English subject in Norwegian schools has undergone quite a few changes in the recent years. The previous national curriculum for primary and lower secondary education, L-97, introduced English in the first grade of primary school, as opposed to fourth grade which was the standard up to then. Also, subject hours were moved from lower secondary school to primary school, leaving lower secondary school with two hours (60 minutes) instead of the previous three hours (45 minutes). L-97 put great focus on ICT and project work as means to learn the language. In 2006 a new curriculum was presented; LK-06, and with this we can state that intercultural learning has become a central objective in the new English subject.

We live in what is often called a ‘global’ world where intercultural communication is a part of daily life. People travel further and more often and it is easy to visit other parts of the world. Being involved with people in other countries is easier now than it was a few years ago due to the Internet as a perfect means of communication. It might therefore be natural to claim that intercultural competence is a part of daily life. Also social media have brought the world even closer together, and the world looks completely different to a teenager today than it did only ten years ago.

LK-06 states that language and culture are intertwined, claiming that we must be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration when using the language.¹ The description of subject objectives for English takes it as a matter of course that we interact with people from other countries. The belief is that knowledge of different cultures and values is a requirement in terms of communication.

This agrees with the statement in Sercu et al; “Language teaching should demonstrate that there are connections between language and culture (vii)”. Byram, one of the most acknowledged scholars within the field of intercultural communication and competence states that “teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence” (22). From these quotes one can read that intercultural competence is a term every language teacher should know and teach. One cannot learn a language completely without learning about the culture in which the language is used, and one cannot fully learn about a culture without also learning how to interact with that culture. In order to interact with the culture one needs to know the language.

¹ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Formaal/?lplang=eng>

1.1 Purpose of Paper

As an English teacher I find teaching intercultural competence very important and in working with this thesis I will try to find out if and how English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway interpret and implement this aspect in their teaching.

The main difference between teaching intercultural competence and teaching traditional culture studies is the focus on interaction. Traditional culture studies teach *about* cultures, intercultural aspects focus on the interaction *between* cultures. It is not enough to merely know facts about a culture; you also need to be able to communicate with inhabitants of the culture. Also, cultural competence involves knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning a specific cultural area, whereas intercultural competence involves knowledge, skills and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas, including one's own country and a target language country (Sercu viii). English is undoubtedly a world language, and the intercultural aspect is therefore important. English is not spoken in one, restricted culture, but in a multitude of cultures in different parts of the world.

Although it is implied, intercultural competence is not an explicit term or competence aim in the Norwegian national curriculum in English in lower secondary school. My experience and understanding is that mostly focus is put on the actual competence aims in the curriculum. Studies made by Byram and Risager (1994) on Danish and British language teachers illustrates this as they point out that teachers are "frustrated in their attempts to treat the cultural dimension seriously because of pressures to produce measureable results and focus in linguistic competence" (quoted in Lundgren 104). In a school system with heavy focus on competence aims it is easy to put less attention on aspects that are not as clearly stated in the curriculum.

Focusing heavily on formal requirements and attempting to reach competence aims has its price. What may possibly be forgotten is that English should be the means of teaching the subject as well as the goal. In addition to the formal requirements, the language should be the tool of teaching both traditional culture studies and intercultural competence. In achieving this one might also achieve a desire to want to learn more English among pupils. It might lead to a positive spiral. Using the language will lead to increased competence which will lead to increased motivation to learn more which again will lead to even higher competence.

Agreeing with Sercu, I consider foreign language teaching to be intercultural. I believe that by implementing intercultural aspects teaching English will be more than teaching a language; it will also include teaching history, religion and social studies. This focus has also

been traceable in the written exams in English during the last years, and signals have been given that this focus will continue. The purpose of this paper is therefore to find out how and if English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway interpret and implement the intercultural aspect in their own teaching. In order to investigate this I have carried out a web-based survey among 47 teachers in Norway. I have contacted 110 lower secondary schools randomly selected from all counties. I first contacted the principals and asked them to distribute the link to their teachers if they themselves consented to the survey. Surprisingly few principals answered my request, although an answer was requested, and of the ones who answered surprisingly few were positive to their school and teachers being part of this research. Of the 47 respondents only 26 completed the survey. I will discuss this further in the section of the paper discussing method.

I hope that this master thesis might shed some light on how the intercultural aspect is interpreted and implemented in lower secondary schools in Norway. Although 26 respondents leave room for other beliefs and practices, I modestly believe that the findings might be of use for others working in the same study field.

1.2 Research Statement

As a conclusion of this chapter I will repeat the aim of my study. My major research question is: “How do English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway interpret the intercultural dimension in the national curriculum, and in which way do they follow up or implement the intercultural dimension in their own teaching, in their own opinion? What do they think their students should learn when it comes to the intercultural aspect?”

To check my theory I will introduce and discuss method and material. The primary material is my respondents; the secondary material consists of literature and previous research.

What I wanted to achieve with my research is to learn more about if and how teachers interpret and implement the intercultural dimension in the national curriculum. Is there a difference between teaching cultural topics and intercultural topics? My personal belief is that the intercultural aspect is just as important part of language teaching as formal aspects such as grammar and pronunciation, but that the intercultural aspect is less emphasized because it is not explicitly mentioned as a competence aim in the national curriculum and also due to the constant time pressure.

To conduct my research I designed a web survey for teachers in lower secondary schools containing questions regarding their understanding of cultural aspects and intercultural aspects and if and how these aspects are implemented in their teaching. The questionnaire is presented later in this thesis.

The reason for me choosing this research topic is dual. First of all I find the topic very interesting, and I strongly believe that focusing on the intercultural dimension and thus focusing on the practical usage of the language will change some students' perspective on English, and help them realize that the subject is so much more than reading texts and memorizing irregular verbs. Secondly, there is not much research on this topic in Norway, and I humbly hope that my research may provide some insight that might be useful to others. If nothing else, I hope that perhaps the survey sent out to 110 schools around the country might have awoken someone's curiosity.

2 Theory

2.1 The Intercultural Dimension in the Norwegian National Curriculum and in School

In order to do research on how English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway interpret the intercultural dimension in the national curriculum and in which way they implement this in their own teaching, an insight into the national curriculum is needed. Seeing as my research focuses on English teachers in lower secondary school I will concentrate on the competence aims after year 10, as these are the ones relevant for my research.

The Knowledge Promotion Reform (LK06) was introduced in autumn 2006. It covers primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training and places increased focus on basic skills and knowledge promotion. The competence aims for each step are clearly stated, yet it is locally decided at each school how to reach them and how to allocate the competence aims throughout the years they cover. The English subject curriculum was updated in 2013, presenting even more focus on the interface between language and culture.

As previously mentioned, the term ‘intercultural’ is not to be found explicitly in the English national curriculum for lower secondary school. It is however identifiable between the lines. In the statement of objectives for teaching English in the English subject curriculum, LK06 indirectly refers to the need to develop intercultural competence. It states that when speaking the language it is important to “be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration”.² It also claims that “communicative skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and cultural competence promote (...) co-citizenship”.³

Respect and understanding between people are raised from knowledge of culture and communicative abilities. Under the headline “Main subject areas” in the national English curriculum there are three titles, where one, “Culture, society and literature”, claims that it is dealing with a wide understanding of culture and explains how working with a variety of texts and cultural expressions is “essential to develop knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people”.⁴

In the competence aims after year 10 one can also find statements referring to intercultural aspects. The pupils are to be able to tell the difference between “positively and

² <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Formaal/?lplang=eng>

³ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Formaal/?lplang=eng>

⁴ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Hovedomraader/?lplang=eng>

negatively loaded expressions referring to individuals and groups”, as well as discuss the way young people “live, socialize and view life and values”⁵ in English speaking countries.

The formal focus on intercultural competence should start in school. Language teachers possess an important role in these matters. An English teacher is supposed to teach the language with its formal requirements, yet also include general facts about English speaking countries. It is for instance important to teach about the American civilization, which could involve learning about the 50 states, the two dominating political parties, facts about the school system and other important aspects concerning the USA. In addition to this, it is important that the pupils gain intercultural competence. A suggestion could be to discuss why the USA does not have a welfare state like Norway. One could bring up historical aspects, like the focus on living the “American dream” where people were to work hard and receive success. Immigration to the USA where the focus was a search of a better life must also be included. These important factors in the American culture, and that the state does not take care of every citizen like the Norwegian state does, are interesting facts to discuss both in an English class and in a social study class.

The aim is to create reflective pupils who are capable of meeting people from other cultures in an appropriate way, yet it is also important that the pupils learn how to reflect upon their own cultural values and identities. They could be asked the question: “How do you believe that Norwegians are being looked upon among other cultures?” Most schools in Norway have pupils from other countries, and it could be an idea to interview these. After having been given initial input on intercultural aspects the pupils could make mind maps sharing their information, and these could be used to lead into further investigations and discussions when it comes to intercultural competence.

When teaching about other cultures we tend to focus on the stereotypes of the cultures. But individuals will never be similar, even though they have the same cultural background. As Samovar presents this; “(...) we are more than our cultures” (31). This is important to keep in mind while teaching. The stereotypes only represent the visible tip of the iceberg.

It is necessary and of great importance to combine intercultural competence training and language training as they complement each other. Global issues should be a part of everyday teaching, and with strong focus on these matters, pupils will gain tolerance and openness in this field.

⁵ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Kompetansemaal/Kompetansemaal-etter-10-arstrinn/?lplang=eng>

2.2 Culture – a Definition

Before looking closer at the definition of the term ‘intercultural competence’ I find it important to look closer at the term culture, as I strongly believe that our understanding of intercultural competence and communication is dependent on first understanding what culture is. This is a complex term, and it is not necessarily easy to define it in few words. Oxford Dictionary⁶ provides three definitions:

- The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively
- The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society
- The attitudes and behaviour characteristics of a particular social group

Also Merriam-Webster⁷ provides three definitions:

- The beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society group, place, or time
- A particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc.
- A way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization (such as business)

According to Hofstede and Hofstede, culture is ‘mental software’; patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime, that every person carries with him- or herself (2-3). According to them, culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned (4).

Samovar et al. provides a definition by Triandis which links culture and communication closely together:

“Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place.” (23)

⁶ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture>

⁷ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>

Samovar et al. also discuss the elements of culture; history, religion, values, social organizations and language (25-26). *History* offers stories of the past which give the members of a culture part of their identity, values, rules of behaviour and the like. *Religion* is something all cultures possess; including among others conflict resolution, reinforcement of group solidarity, explanations of the unexplainable, and emotional support. *Values* are the guidelines within a culture; values help determine how people ought to behave. *Social organizations* represent the various social units experienced within the culture, such as family, school, and work. *Language* is a crucial component to a culture, seeing as it is what makes the people within the culture being able to communicate (25-26). Or, as Hall is quoted; “Culture is communication and communication is culture” (22).

As proven in this subchapter, the term culture is quite complex and diverse, yet there are common traits in the different definitions. I will now move on to defining intercultural competence.

2.3 Intercultural Competence – a Definition

Intercultural competence is a complex term, and it necessary to define it to understand it. Lund provides a definition from the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Language Teaching and Learning*: “Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own” (Guilherme 2000, qtd. in Lund 2).

According to Byram, to have intercultural competence is to be able to interact with people from other countries and cultures, using your knowledge about intercultural competence (70), and he claims that intercultural competence consists of five ‘savoirs’; attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness.

When Byram speaks of *attitudes* he is concerned with attitudes towards people who are perceived as different, i.e. have different cultural backgrounds. These differences show in cultural meanings, beliefs and behaviours they exhibit. These attitudes are often, but not always, negative, and they can also be described as stereotypes or prejudice (34). A positive intercultural attitude does not mean that one always has to be positive, but being open minded and curious towards others is vital. If one has a closed mind one will not succeed in positive interacting across cultural borders. The term *knowledge* is divided into two categories; knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one’s own country as well as the

knowledge about the same factors in the interlocutor's own country, and knowledge of the processes of interaction at the individual and the societal level (35). Through socialization primarily in the family and secondarily in the educational system, individuals acquire social knowledge. Some of this knowledge is conscious while some of it remains unconscious. Sometimes one automatically knows how to interact in different social settings. The skill of *interpreting and relating* draws upon existing knowledge (37) and it stands out due to the fact that it does not need to involve interaction with other cultures. The skill of *discovery* is often a part of social interaction, but it is not always required. The skill of *interaction*, however, is dependent on interaction with the interlocutor. By *critical cultural awareness* Byram means that it is important to be able to evaluate other cultures critically, and not always accept everything. This is important in one's own culture as well as other cultures (2).

Although most theorists agree with Byram that attitudes, knowledge and skills are important factors in developing intercultural competence, some questions have been raised, especially when it comes to teaching intercultural competence in language training. Byram speaks of general qualities that are needed to gain intercultural competence regardless of language and culture, whereas other scholars focus in intercultural aspects in language training. For instance, Lund (3) asks how we can know exactly which parts of a culture the pupils need to be prepared for. This is particularly an issue in teaching English, as this is a language spoken in every corner of the world and therefore in several cultures. Which culture should focus be put on? Karen Risager (2007) argues that we should think more globally. She states that "(...) an interculturally competent person is one who knows and cares about global issues and who sees him- or herself as a world citizen rather than a citizen of a particular nation" (qtd. in Lund 3). This is the same mind-set as Claire Kramsch (1993) argues in claiming that pupils need to be confronted with many cultures and multiple perspectives. They need to see that their own cultural identity is only one among many (qtd. in Lund 4).

Sercu claims that foreign language education is, by definition, intercultural, in the sense that bringing a foreign language into a classroom means connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own (1).

2.4 Intercultural Competence in a Theoretical Frame

The most recent studies done on intercultural competence with regard to foreign language teaching in Scandinavia are done by Lundgren and Lund. Lundgren's study speaks of intercultural understanding in English teaching in Sweden. She states the importance of intercultural competence in language teaching, and claims that by focusing on this, intercultural understanding and competence will be the core of the subject, while the language itself will be the means of reaching this goal. Believing this will lead to a focus on two central aspects of language teaching; communication and intercultural communication, the pupils will also be given the opportunity to develop an intercultural communicative competence (35).

In Norway, Lund has done the same research. She refers to Lundgren's study and indicates that the situation is the same in Norway as in Sweden. Teachers have different ideas of what intercultural competence is, and how to teach it. Like Lundgren, Lund states that the educational authorities in both countries are vague and contradictory when referring to intercultural issues (2).

My own pilot study; my method and project paper "Intercultural competence in lower secondary school", which this thesis is based on, agrees with the research mentioned above. I interviewed seven teachers at my own school and found that not all the respondents were familiar with the term, yet all had a (vague) notion of what it is, and the importance of including it in their own language teaching. In what way and to which degree intercultural aspects were implemented seemed to vary quite a lot and it seemed that it also depended on the teacher. This concurs with Lundgren and Lund; that teachers have different ideas of what intercultural competence is, and how to teach it.

Lund also points to LK06 in her study by stating that it indirectly refers to the need for pupils to concern themselves with intercultural issues. In the statement of objectives for the subject one can read that pupils need to be able to adapt their language to "an increasing number" of communication situations and to "take cultural norms and conventions into consideration" when using the language, in order to "succeed in a world where English is used for international interpersonal communication". To do so, pupils need intercultural skills (4). She concludes that the objectives in the LK06 English curriculum call for the introduction of intercultural issues in the teaching of English. It does not, however, emphasize the importance of the development of the pupils' attitudes towards other cultures. Cultural sensitivity, behaviour flexibility and empathy are key terms that are not mentioned (6).

Also Dypedahl emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence and its presence in the national curriculum. He describes intercultural competence as the ability to communicate adequately and appropriately with people with a different cultural background (4). Dypedahl argues that language teachers should bring intercultural perspectives into foreign language teaching. He suggests that traditional culture studies are a natural starting point in teaching intercultural aspects. To be able to gain intercultural competence one needs to be able to reflect upon one's own and others' cultures and behaviours. He also points out that the competence aims in LK06 focus more and more on intercultural aspects as the pupils gets older. They are the most obvious in upper secondary school.

Although Dypedahl states the importance of teaching intercultural competence, he is conscious of the fact that intercultural aspects are not traditional parts of higher linguistic education. He claims that by many they are not considered important or natural parts of language teaching (6). He therefore also emphasizes that the teaching of intercultural competence should not alter the whole teaching of English, but that a new perspective and mind-set is what is needed. He also underlines that intercultural competence, as all competence aims, is something every pupil should strive for, yet all will not achieve the same level. Intercultural competence and the development of it is however not strictly limited to school and language training, nor should it be. Developing intercultural competence is something that also must take place in all of the arenas in which people exist (6), such as spare time activities, in family surroundings etc.

Even though Dybedahl highlights the importance of developing intercultural competence also outside of school he declares that language teachers are very appropriate for the job of teaching it, as they are very used to working with communication as well as thinking internationally. On some level, consciously or unconsciously, they have some degree of intercultural competence. They think and reflect upon themselves and their own culture, and they think and reflect upon others and their culture (7). It is therefore natural to assume that language teachers naturally include intercultural aspects in their teaching.

Sercu et al performed an international investigation about foreign language teachers and intercultural competence, in which 224 language teachers from seven countries were interviewed on their beliefs regarding intercultural competence teaching. According to Sercu, teachers are supposed to already have moved well into the direction of intercultural teaching, leaving the traditional culture teaching behind (6).

From the study, two distinct teacher profiles appeared; the 'favourably disposed foreign language teacher', and the 'unfavourably disposed foreign language teacher' (10),

where the favourably disposed teacher believe that teaching culture is as important as teaching the language, and the unfavourably disposed teacher believe that it is impossible to integrate language and culture. Their findings further suggested that foreign language teachers are moving towards becoming teachers of intercultural competence, however their profiles fails to meet all the expectations concerning knowledge, skills and attitudes required in a truly competent teacher of foreign language and intercultural competence.

3 Method

Method is a broad term referring to how research is done; how a researcher might collect, read and analyse data. Different methods are constructive for this purpose. The choice of method depends on what the researcher wants to find out. In this chapter I will discuss my choice of method as well as present the survey design, my respondents and the questions in the survey.

3.1 Choice of Method

The aim of this study is to research how English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway interpret and implement the intercultural dimension in their own teaching. It was therefore evident that my primary material had to consist of English teachers, seeing as they themselves best know this.

As I started to think about how to accomplish my research a lot of time was spent debating with myself what would be the most beneficial method for my study. I soon ended up with two alternatives, interviews or written questionnaires, as both methods are useful in finding out about people's linguistic and social behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and perception (Wray and Bloomer 152).

When it came to choosing between interviews and questionnaires, several factors influenced my final choice. First of all, the time available was limited, both because of the format of the paper and also the fact that I work full time while writing this thesis. I was afraid I would not have the time to both perform and fully analyse the interviews properly. Analysing interviews takes a long time, seeing as they often include questions that go beyond the core of the study. In a questionnaire the author controls the contents. Because I wanted to interview teachers from all of Norway it also became a matter of time and costs. Therefore I decided on questionnaires.

There are many advantages using questionnaires. For one, they are useful for surveying a lot of people in many different locations (158). Also, electronic and web-based questionnaires provide data that are already transcribed and may easily be sorted (160). However there are also disadvantages. First of all, even though the questions are open ended, a questionnaire will fail to ask any natural follow up questions that might have been natural in an oral interview. In addition, respondents rarely make additional comments. The questions,

and thus what is of interest, are defined by the author, and this has both positive and negative effects. It is positive that the author avoids any unnecessary information controlling the questions, yet it is negative that the respondents might feel less free to add additional information. It is easy to assume that the author only wants answers to the specific questions. Another challenge is that if there are doubts or questions regarding the questionnaires these will not be asked and answered right away, and it might even be easier *not* to ask questions. In addition to this there is a risk of low response rate.

3.2 Survey Design

There are a lot of aspects to consider when designing a questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire is to provide questions that will help the respondents give the information you need. Wray and Bloomer discuss the direct approach versus the indirect approach (155). In the direct approach the interviewer is straightforward and truthful about his or her interests. It minimizes the risks of being misunderstood, yet it also expands the risk of the respondents wanting to please you and giving answers they think you want. In the indirect approach the interviewer ask distracting questions that will indirectly lead to the answers you need. The greatest risk in the indirect approach is the respondents developing their own opinions about what you want and go off at an irrelevant tangent (155).

In my research I ask questions following the direct approach, yet I have been careful not to ask leading questions. To be certain that all questions were understandable and answerable I performed a pilot study with the great help from some of my colleagues, the English teachers at my own school. As I wrote a project and method paper on the same topic using my colleagues as respondents I did not include them in my respondents group for my thesis. They were nevertheless excellent help in my pilot study.

There are many benefits in piloting a questionnaire. It increases the value of a survey, and it will shed light on any problems with the questionnaire (McKay 41). There are especially two items that are important to check; are there any questions where the respondents answered almost identically and are there any questions that were omitted by many respondents? If many respondents give similar responses to a question it is important to check the wording of the question, it might be a leading question. If many respondents have omitted the same question it might mean that the question is confusing or difficult to answer (41). In my pilot study there were no findings of the items above. The response I got was that

the hardest question to answer was the one concerning education, as the educational system in Norway has changed several times and it was difficult to know the names of the different courses.

The questionnaire consists of twelve questions in all, and an optional question 13 for additional comments. It will provide two types of information; factual information and attitudinal information (35). Factual questions are used to find out characteristics of each respondent while attitudinal questions cover the beliefs, opinions or interests. It consists of seven open ended questions, whereof five are attitudinal and specifically covers intercultural communication and competence. The other questions ask for factual information; age, current teaching situation and formal education in English. The questionnaire in its whole is in the appendix of this paper. The respondents' answers are with the author, but will be presented upon request. All of the respondents have answered anonymously.

Together with the questionnaire I sent out a short letter which stated the topic and importance of the questionnaire, a request for honest response and a promise of confidentiality (Dornyei (2003) in McKay 40). The complete questionnaire and the letter to the principals are to be found as appendixes to this thesis.

3.3 The Questions

The questionnaire consists of six factual questions:

- a) Contact information
- b) Gender and nationality
- c) For how many years have you taught English?
- d) What is your formal education in English? Please state your education and the year you finished your studies.
- e) Do you have any other formal education that might be relevant for my study?

Factual questions are called factual questions (McKay 35), as they reveal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, language background etc. These factual questions are included to help get a picture of the respondents. Will there be differences among the teachers based on how long they have taught English, or what other relevant education they might have? I did not include any geographical data among these questions, as it is not important to the research. As an afterthought I do however realize that it might have been interesting to see the spread around the country.

The remaining questions are attitudinal and behavioural. Attitudinal questions seek to find out more about the opinions, beliefs, or interests of teachers (McKay 35), while behavioural questions seek to find out more about what students or teachers have done or regularly do in terms of their language teaching (McKay 35). Both of these aspects are important to this study, as I do not primarily want to find out only what teachers claim to know or mean about the intercultural dimension (attitude), I also want to find out if and how they implement it (behaviour). In the survey there are two questions concerning culture:

- f) What does 'culture' mean to you?
- g) What do you understand by teaching culture in your class?

With these questions I wanted to make the respondents feel that they were asked something they are sure to know, yet I also wanted to see if the respondent separate the terms 'culture' and intercultural', which I introduce in the next five questions:

- h) What does the term 'intercultural competence' mean to you?
- i) Do you consider the intercultural dimension an important part of teaching English?
- j) Why do you consider the intercultural dimension an important part of teaching English?
- k) What do you do to promote intercultural competence in your English class?
- l) In your opinion; what should students learn when it comes to the intercultural dimension of language teaching?

Asking this I wanted to find out specific beliefs and attitudes towards the intercultural dimension. Question j) is the only closed question in the attitudinal and behavioural section. Respondents who answered 'no' to this question were asked to move on to the last question, which gives room for additional comments, as I only wanted to study the actual implementation. In retrospect it would have been very interesting to have included a question for those who answered negatively where they could have stated their reasons for not thinking it is important in language teaching.

3.4 The Respondents

The primary material for this thesis is a respondent group consisting of randomly selected English teachers from all over Norway. Seeing as my intention is to research what English teachers think and implement regarding the intercultural aspect it seemed natural to interview the teachers themselves. As Wray and Bloomer states; “if you want to find something about people’s knowledge or beliefs, one very obvious way is to ask them (152).

I wanted to have as large a group of respondents as possible, yet I knew it would be challenging to get a true random sample “in which every individual in a population has an equal chance of being included in the survey” (McKay 37). I therefore aimed for a sample of convenience; the respondents I was able to get access to (37). Because my covering letter was posted to the principals and not the English teachers directly I knew I was dependent on the principals in order to get access to my material.

I contacted schools from all over Norway, making sure that every region was represented. I have not included questions regarding geographical placing in the questionnaire, as I am more interested in the general tendencies in Norway, not any specific region.

I ended up making online questionnaires for the respondents to answer online. I used www.surveymonkey.com, a tool I had used earlier and was familiar with. One of the benefits to a web-based survey is that it is easy to send out and easy for the respondents to answer and return. Another benefit is that the distance between interviewer and interviewee makes the interviewee feel more relaxed and probe to answering honestly. However, this feeling might also lead to not taking the survey seriously, or not responding at all.

To achieve a representative number of respondents I hoped to reach 50 respondents. I first sent a request by email to 49 randomly selected schools. The email was addressed to the principal at each school, asking for his or her permission to interview the school’s English teachers. The response was surprisingly low. Only 13 principals answered; ten positive and two negative. I had to send out two more emails, ending up at 110 requests in total. 22 principals out of the 110 answered my emails; thirteen positive and nine negative responses. The ones with negative responses had quite similar excuses; too little time and too many requests from the outside world. The letter I sent to the principals is attached to this thesis, as is the questionnaire.

The low response rate made things more complicated than I had foreseen. I had thought the most challenging thing would be analysing the data, not collecting the data. I was

also quite surprised at the low number of responses from the principals. Are the schools in Norway this closed? Do we not want the outside world to know what we are doing? I find this topic very interesting, however could I not find time to research this further, neither is it relevant for my study. It is however worth noticing in this time when schools and teachers claim to not be appreciated. Perhaps we would gain from giving more insight into what we do?

The total number of respondents ended up being 48. At least, that is the number stated on surveymonkey.com. When I started analysing the results, I realized that a lot of the respondents did not answer the whole survey, in fact only 26 completed. I will discuss this further in the discussion part of this thesis.

4 Results and Discussion

In this chapter I will present and discuss the survey results in detail, and provide a summary of the major findings.

4.1 Results

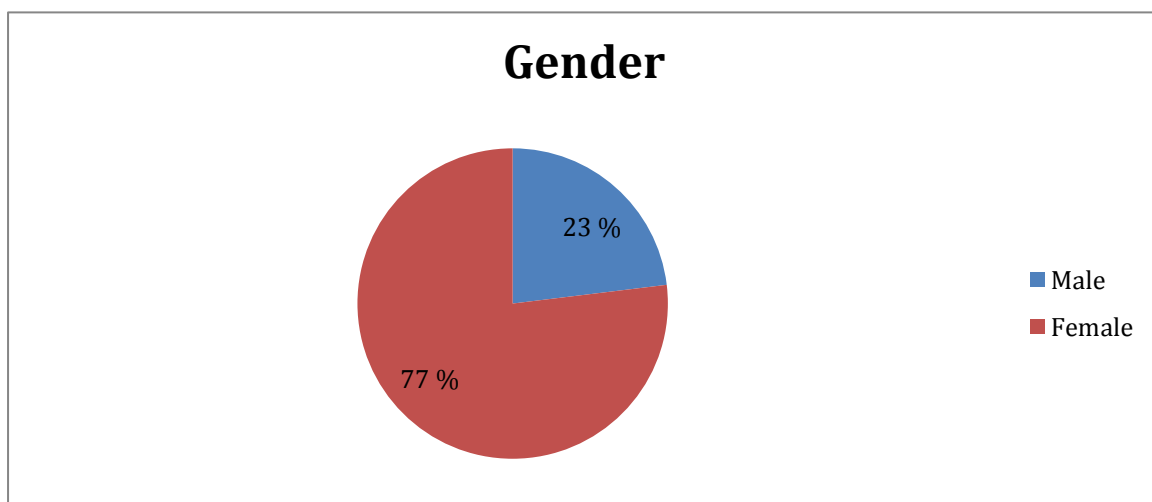
In this part of the paper I will analyse and explain the findings in the questionnaire. Questions will be explained and presented separately, however there will be a final conclusion of the findings in the end of the chapter. The respondents are totally anonymous. Their answers are with the author of this paper, and they are not traceable to the different respondents other than the ten who have voluntarily provided their mail addresses. As the attitudinal and behavioural questions are all open ended, I have chosen to reproduce all answers as they were given by the respondents to make sure that no answer is left out or misinterpreted by myself. I will then summarize and comment on the answers.

I will start by looking closer at the respondents through the factual questions, before I turn to the questions concerning attitudes and behaviour.

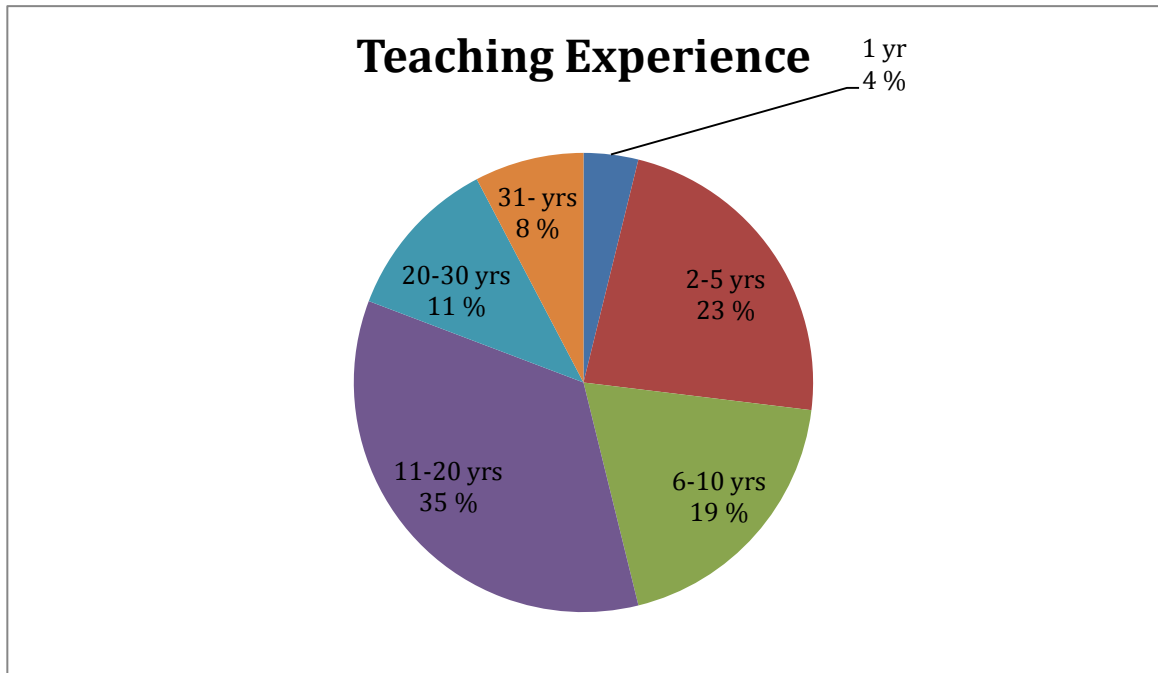
4.2 Factual Questions

4.2.1 Gender

The answers to this question reveal that the respondent group consists of 21 of women and 6 men. Even in a study with small numbers this confirms the belief that there women and men are not equally represented in lower secondary schools in Norway.



4.2.2 Teaching Experience



The numbers show that very few of the respondents are beginners in teaching English. Only 4 % (1 respondent) claims that it is his or her first year as an English teacher. The respondents in the largest group have 11-20 years of teaching experience in English, representing 35 % of the total. In addition to the one with only one year, the smallest group is the one consisting of teachers with the most experience, 31 years or more. This group equals 8 % of the total. It is interesting to see that the group with the most experience is so small, compared to the rest. It cannot be claimed, but perhaps it is a tiny indicator of the situation in Norway, where many teachers choose to retire early or choose other employment during their last working years, due to the fact that being a teacher is quite the challenging job.

4.2.3 Education

Due to the fact that the respondents have answered this question using different wordings and explanations I have not made a chart to show the result, as it quite simply proved too challenging. For instance, some respondents have answered “university” to this question, and it is impossible for me to interpret the amount of study points this involves. Regarding education, two of the respondents say that they have no formal education in teaching English. Three respondents have studied English for half a year, the rest seem to be well educated, having studies lasting from one year to master’s degrees. It is however worth

noticing the total of five respondents with none or little education in English. English is a subject the students might have exams in both oral and written, and at this level one expects educated teachers. The respondents' level of education is not necessarily important to the study, yet the combination of different subjects might be. In my pilot study I found that the teachers with combined language and some sort of cultural education were more conscious about the intercultural dimension. In this study, 14 respondents answer that they have relevant education within religion, history or social science. Four answer that they are educated in other languages (German, Italian, Norwegian and French).

4.2.4 Ethnicity in the Classrooms

All 26 respondents stated that they have different ethnic groups in their classroom. The number is however difficult to analyse due to the fact that a lot of the respondents state several answers because they teach several classes. The percentage differs from 1% to 40 %.

4.2.5 Other Comments

There were 48 respondents originally, yet only 27 completed the survey. Of these, one respondent completed, yet answered only random letters, and thus I have ended up with 26 respondents in total. The fact that so many stopped answering the survey might lead to the suspicion that the intercultural competence is something that a lot of teachers are unsure of. The number of respondents not completing the questionnaire leads back to the question asked in the introduction; are teachers in Norway afraid of showing their competence, or lack thereof? I find it worrying and troublesome that so many of my colleagues do not take surveys like these, which sneak a peek into our school system, more seriously. This might lead into a whole other discussion which there is no room for here. I do however find it worth mentioning.

Those who have completed the survey have mostly given long in-depth answers throughout the questionnaire. In fact, there is a huge gap between the respondents completing the survey and displaying a positive attitude towards the intercultural dimension and the respondents not completing the survey in matter of giving thorough answers.

Before I turn to the attitudinal and behavioural questions I would like to summarize the group of respondents. Most of the respondents are women and they have taught English

for approximately 15 years. Most of the respondents are Norwegian. 14 respondents have relevant education within religion, history or social science. Four answer that they are educated in other languages (German, Italian, Norwegian and French). Almost all respondents state that they have different ethnic groups in their classes. It did prove difficult to provide an exact summary of this question, as the answers were given in both numbers and percentage. Most importantly, only 26 respondents completed the survey. As the attitudinal and behavioural questions are all open ended, and therefore difficult to present in charts, I have chosen to reproduce all answers given by the respondents to make sure that no answer is left out or misinterpreted by myself and also to show the width in answers. I will then summarize the answers.

4.3 Attitudinal Questions

After having presented the group of respondents through the factual questions, I will now turn to the questions regarding culture and intercultural competence, thus analysing the answers given by the respondents. There are six attitudinal questions in the questionnaire.

4.3.1 What does the term 'culture' mean to you?

The respondents have given thorough answers to what they think culture is, and I found it very interesting to read all of the definitions. Although they use different phrasings they give answers that are closely linked, and they seem to agree on what culture is. The words music, art, tradition, typical ways of life, literature, language, history, and religion are all stated by more than five respondents each. This indicates that culture is something the teachers interviewed are quite familiar with and comfortable with.

There seems to be two main categories, where one is culture as in a people's cultural aspects, i.e. the focus is on the people and their ways of life, such as values and traditions. The other category is culture as in cultural expressions, i.e. the entertainment a people enjoy, such as arts and drama. Most of the respondents have defined culture using examples from both categories.

Cultural Aspects	Cultural Expressions
<p>Language, history, food and music</p> <p>Manners</p> <p>Scholarly pursuits</p> <p>Culture in this connection is everything which is typical of the way of life in English spoken places</p> <p>Dimensions of what is associated with the nationality in question, i.e. tea, roast beef, understatements, historical heritage, way of living, and more</p> <p>Culture is what people do</p> <p>Heritage, music, values and ways of living</p> <p>The context you live in: language, music, food, history, religion, backgrounds etc.</p> <p>Populærkultur, historie, nasjonal kultur, politisk system, ideologi, religion, litteratur</p> <p>Culture is part of the life we live and differs from community to community</p> <p>People's way of living their lives</p> <p>Expressions of the human mind exceeding those necessary to cover basic needs</p> <p>The way of life</p> <p>Tradition, getting to know another country, its traditions and habits, its language, cuisine, and music.</p> <p>Culture means language, learning another language, reading literature, learning about your country and other countries.</p> <p>Skapt av mennesker. Et sett ideer, kunnskap, verdier og praksis som en gruppe mennesker deler.</p> <p>Different peoples language, customs, attitudes, knowledge, and music, clothes, etc.</p> <p>It can be typical features of a civilization (Greek culture), beliefs and behaviour of different</p>	<p>Art</p> <p>Music, literature, drama, paintings – all artists 'production'</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>Food, sports, architecture, clothing history, music, etc. are all part of our culture, art, It can be a museum, a new place you visit, theatre, an exhibition</p> <p>What people produce in the sense of art, literature, music and more.</p> <p>Expression through art and language.</p> <p>Art</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Art</p> <p>Different expressions (like music, art, cinema, dance etc.) on themes which interest you and make you grow in different ways.</p> <p>Sports, music</p> <p>Social issues, literature and other cultural expressions (art, music, religion)</p>

<p>people, different norms and , attitudes</p> <p>All that identifies me as a person, my school as a school, my town as a town and so on..</p> <p>Human history</p> <p>history, and social settings</p> <p>A set of social "rules" and tradition which are passed through generations. What is "common practice" in your community/country/part of the world. Religion and race can be part of your culture, tradition...</p> <p>Language, history</p> <p>It means traditions, religion and social differences</p> <p>Closely linked to one's identity: Values, traditions, language, religion</p>	
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4.3.2 What do you understand by teaching culture in your class?

To this question, four respondents answered “see last question” or similar. I have not included these answers in this rendition of the answers.

To this questions, all answers concerning ‘culture’ fall into the category mentioned above; culture as in a people’s cultural aspects, i.e. the focus is on the people and their ways of life, such as values and traditions.

From the answers one can read that culture is being taught, yet that there is no noticeable common method to it. Although many respondents mention a lot of the same elements, the answers indicate that how much and what is being taught about culture to a large degree is dependent on the teacher responsible for the teaching. One respondent states in a very honest response that she does not have enough focus on teaching cultural elements. It is however worth noticing that seven respondents focus on both their own culture and the culture of the English speaking country being taught.

Cultural Aspects

Teaching about English-speaking countries; geography, history and society in general

Teach the students about our culture (our heritage) and about the cultural heritage in English speaking countries. Acceptance and understanding.

Showing the students similarities and differences between their own culture (Norwegian or other) and English speaking places

I try to include elements of all the things I mentioned

Making the pupils understand the essence of diversity between people. This by giving examples using all means available!

Not sure if I understand the question correctly, but if you're asking how I teach culture in class, I must say that I unfortunately don't have enough focus on it. I feel "tied down" by the books we use, our focus in on language, speaking and grammar, and awareness of culture is often "hidden". The books and topics often include information, history and culture about English-speaking countries, but we often just tend to read the texts, and not discuss them too much (Compare with our own culture etc.) But I understand the importance of understanding culture and cultural differences, it's often just forgotten, which, of course, is a terrible excuse....

Teaching historical backgrounds of different issues, contemporary issues of certain areas – geographical, teaching music and literature of English speaking countries, teaching language of different areas

Undervise Brit/Amer, imperiehistorie, tradisjoner, eng-språklig litteratur, språklige variasjoner, innflytelse på og fra andre kulturer

Show different ways of living, doing things understanding, and compare/relate to something the students already know

Learn what it is, be aware of own culture and others' history and present, bring it on, understand the challenges and roots of meaningless conflicts, respect and love differences

To give my students an idea of the various ways people express themselves in English speaking countries

Teaching typical features that makes the culture stand out

There are various methods and techniques of teaching culture. Reading a text about a writer or an excerpt from a novel can be a method. In this way the pupils get acquainted with the literature from another country. Working on a project can be an interesting method because it helps the pupils to get to know a lot about the history, traditions of another country. They get more engaged and read a lot about things they hadn't known before. Music and singing can be very engaging and funny at the same time. Performing a presentation or a play in which the pupils can wear some customs can be a way to get to know other cultures.

Å lære om likheter og forskjeller mellom oss og mennesker i andre land (først og fremst

engelskspråklige land). Prøve å forstå hvordan andre mennesker i verden tenker og er.

Teaching the pupils about different cultures in English speaking countries around the world.

I don't completely understand the question. Culture is part of our curriculum and we work with culture in many various ways.

Learning/discussing with the pupils about what identifies them as inhabitants in this town, this country, on this globe

To put the target language into proper historical and political context.

I try to incorporate as much art/literature, history, information and general trivia as possible. By telling stories, listening to music, watching films and reading texts.

Present the class to different cultures throughout the (English speaking) world, teach them about respect and tolerance for different practices. It can also be to teach them about the Arts.

I understand by teaching culture in my class that I try in different ways to open both their acceptance to different forms of culture and to make them understand more complicated themes and discuss what we experience, mostly together.

Reading/hearing about/discussing music, fashion, sports & tradition in English speaking countries

Give the pupils insight into how individuals think and live in the English-speaking world.

Teaching the pupils about history, music, art

Trying to convey traditions and social phenomena in different countries.

In teaching English I understand teaching culture by exploring the culture of the English-speaking countries of the world. That includes everything from history, religion and literature to everyday life and politics in given country. I also think it's important to explore similarities and differences between those countries and also to our own country Norway. In this context students should be aware of what the term 'culture' might refer to, and they should be able to link it to identity.

4.3.3 What does the term 'intercultural competence' mean to you?

As stated earlier in this thesis, there are different definitions of intercultural competence. Lund stated that it is the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own (2) whereas Sercu claims that it involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes at the interface between several cultural areas (vii). And not the least we have Byram's *savoirs* (34-37).

Having this in mind one might read from the answers given by the respondents that although they are not all spot on, they all seem to have a notion about what intercultural competence is. Not all use the term 'interaction', however they mention social settings,

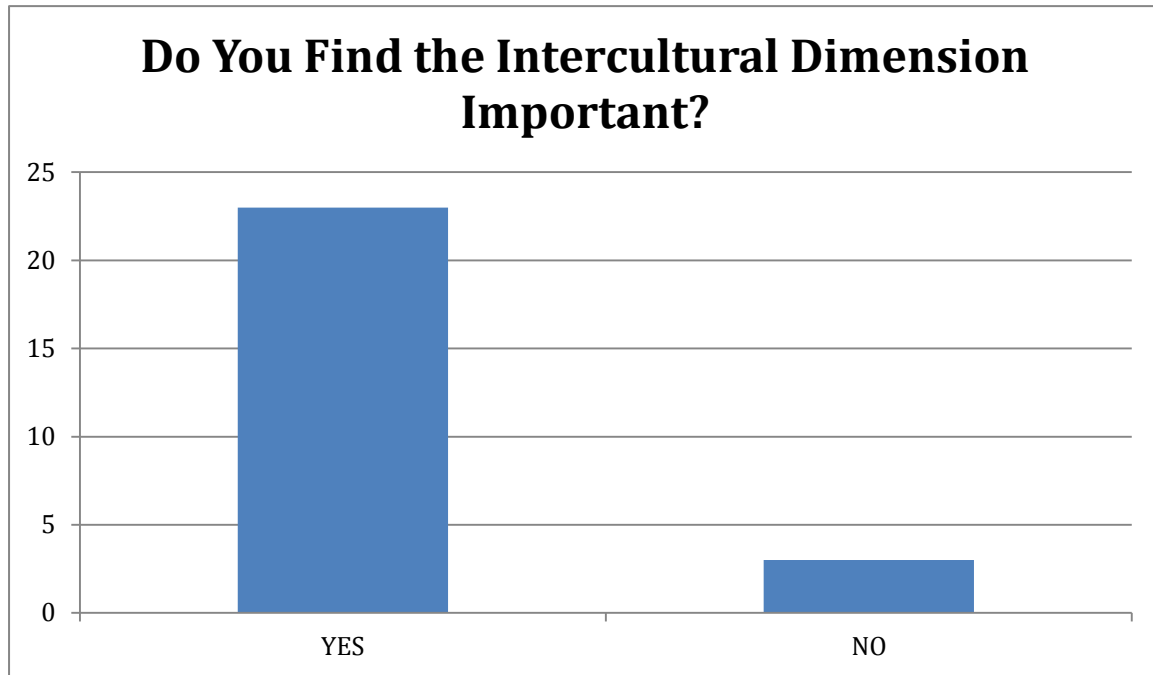
understanding, communicating and so on, and even more importantly, most answers can be gathered into Sercu's categories.

Knowledge	Skills/Behaviour	Attitudes
<p>Competence of cultures across borders and knowledge about our global society</p> <p>Knowing something about other cultures and being able to relate to them; understanding, tolerance, acceptance – but not necessarily agreeing</p> <p>Understand the differences between where I am from and other places. Have an open mind to people and cultures that are “strange” to me.</p> <p>Intercultural competence is to have met and known other places and people.</p> <p>Intercultural competence means you have knowledge of other cultures, and as a teacher be able to pass this info on to the students</p> <p>Interaction based on knowledge and respect and free of complications</p> <p>To have an understanding of the immense variation of cultural expressions and experiences</p> <p>Knowing about differences between cultures, make people able to live with and in them</p> <p>Having knowledge about people, places, history and</p>	<p>To be able to understand other peoples' culture and be able to communicate with people from other cultures</p> <p>That you have some sort of experience with other cultures, which gives you an understanding, or at least a feeling for other cultures</p> <p>The ability to interact with people of different cultures, and the ability to live in more than one culture (that is if your family has another background than your friends' families)</p> <p>Evne til å forstå og forholde seg til ulike kulturer, kunne emulere dem og hente fra dem for å kunne danne egen identitet</p> <p>It defines the ability of interacting, of talking to other people that come from foreign countries. Cooperation or exchange programme with another country where people can connect with each other by getting to know each other's traditions, cultural differences and learning from each other.</p> <p>Å forstå andre kulturer. Skjønne hva slags rammer som former deres liv.</p>	<p>Being comfortable outside your own culture</p> <p>It is about creating understanding between different cultures. Tolerance is a topic in several of our topics.</p> <p>To be aware of the differences in the world - and being aware of what cultural themes are global</p> <p>The realisation that the world is big and the way different nations have organised their lives both culturally, politically and socially can be extremely varied. In this context Norway is a very small and exotic place compared to how the vast majority of the human race lead their lives. This should inspire respect and humility when we approach another language and its cultural sphere.</p> <p>Understanding other cultures, mixing cultures</p>

<p>cultures form different parts of the world and being able to adapt this knowledge to your surroundings and use it to communicate with people from different cultures.</p> <p>That you have the necessary competence to communicate with people from different To me it means to learn about and to experience other cultures, i.e. by cooking food from other parts of the world and watching i.e. movies from other social situations and from other parts of the world and to try to put this knowledge and experience into a context so that the students hopefully become more open-minded to "the other" cultures</p> <p>To have knowledge about other cultures - being able to understand how people from other countries react/ behave etc. Basically knowledge of other cultures, and the usage of this knowledge in situations where different cultures meet. Mutual respect is of course preferred as a result of this knowledge, though not always present.</p>	<p>If you have intercultural competence you are able to interact with people from different cultures in a good way, and make yourself understood and understand others.</p> <p>This doesn't mean just the linguistic skills, but also to be aware of cultural differences (eye contact, greetings, body language, personal space etc.)</p> <p>If my pupils have got these skills it will promote understanding and respect between pupils with different cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>Being able to function socially in different cultures</p>	
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4.3.4 Do you consider the intercultural dimension important?

Of the 26 respondents who answered this question, 23 respondents answered that they consider the intercultural dimension an important part of teaching English, and 3 respondents answered that they do not find it important.



4.3.5 Why?

This question is only answered by the respondents who stated that they think the intercultural dimension is an important part of teaching English. Although the respondents use different terminologies, from the answers one can read that quite a few of the respondents state that language competence alone is not enough to be able to use the language correctly when meeting another culture. Although the respondents agree that the intercultural dimension is important, they give different reasons for their beliefs, mostly within two categories; the ones who state that it is important for the students' personal development, and the ones who find it important also when it comes to specific language learning or usage.

Personal growth	Language learning
<p>I live and work in a small Norwegian town, where many people might be considered “close-minded”. It’s important to teach the pupils that there is a world outside of this town, and that it’s ok not to be exactly like the people in it. Teach them to understand and value differences. But, as said before, I’m not good enough at putting focus on this...</p> <p>Because it is part of our curriculum and must be done. The most important reason is of course to help our students to be more open minded and tolerant toward people who are different.</p> <p>It's important to understand other cultures.</p> <p>Important to get an insight into the culture of English-speaking countries.</p>	<p>Because learning language cannot be isolated from context</p> <p>It is important in order to gain access to literature written in English. It also gives confidence when visiting an English spoken country</p> <p>Important part of understanding the culture/the people/the nation, and important for knowing how to relate to people/how to behave if/when you meet Brits/Americans/English speaking people or travel to the countries</p> <p>English is (still) the most important language in the world. Language is a key door opener in making contact and understanding other cultures and people. So, through teaching English, we have a good opportunity to teach social science as well.</p> <p>Viktig at engelsk er mer enn et språk, det er også deltakelse i både engelskspråklige og internasjonale samfunn</p> <p>Learning about how things are in an English speaking country is an important part of understanding the language</p> <p>International communication</p> <p>To prepare my students for their encounters with people of a varied cultural background</p> <p>It is an important aspect of every humanistic subject. In English especially because of the many different cultures having English as their mother tongue</p> <p>English is a foreign language for many people. Then pupils have to learn how to use the language in everyday situations, they need the courage to speak the language because there are many pupils that don't dare to speak even if they</p>

	<p>can. I think that intercultural dimension is very important specially if there are pupils from other countries in the same class that don't speak Norwegian and in such a way the pupils can speak English, learn about other countries much easier.</p> <p>En av nytteverdien av å kunne språk er i møte med andre mennesker. Skal kommunikasjonen fungere optimalt må du kunne mer enn ordene. Du må også kjenne kulturen..</p> <p>Because the pupils have to learn about other cultures, and to respect other cultures, in order to interact with people from other countries and cultures in a good way.</p> <p>It is an important part of teaching in general. They need to be able to communicate about this. Because you can't understand a language out of its cultural and social context.</p> <p>Because English is spoken in a number of countries (besides England) and most of these countries again are multicultural.</p> <p>I believe it is important to teach my students about tolerance, respect for others and empathy. It is also important to teach them that not everyone has the same set of "un-written rules! as we do, and they need to consider that when they travel, or interact with people from other cultures.</p> <p>Because English is a world language and many people around the world are proficient in English. English has been used as the teaching and cultural language in the British colonies and is still an official language in the former British colonies, so in order to understand the spread of English and its importance culture wise it is absolutely necessary!</p>
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	<p>It's necessary to understand people from other countries, not only their language - to understand their culture - they may have totally different traditions + it's interesting for the students to learn about the countries to</p> <p>Because linguistic and cultural competence contributes to personal development, a democratic commitment and a better understanding of responsible citizenship.</p> <p>Because knowing a language is not enough to function in a society.</p>
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4.3.6 What should students learn when it comes to the intercultural dimension?

The respondents seem to differ a bit on this question, and can be divided into two main categories; the ones linking culture and language and the ones only relating to culture. One respondent answered that he/she does not know. The answers might indicate that teachers are unsure of what the students are expected to learn, and thus what they are expected to teach. Two respondents omitted answering this question. As they have answered all other questions, giving in-depth answers, I have chosen to include them in the study, as I do not see that they have aborted the survey. One might assume that they find this question similar to the others and therefore have not answered this particular question.

Language and Culture Awareness	Culture Awareness
<p>That there's no culture better than another. Learn to appreciate and find differences interesting/fascinating.</p> <p>Get some understanding of what it is like in other cultures gives them a knowledge that can prevent prejudice</p> <p>That the human experience is vast and wonderful, and to be open for its manifestations</p> <p>Toleranse og respekt, åpenhet, men samtidig være bevisst sine egne meninger og holdninger</p>	<p>How to make use of existing grants and programs so they can expand everyday teaching of languages</p> <p>They should learn enough to be able to use and understand English closest possibly to the native language. This involves a lot of different bits and pieces which are impossible to list</p> <p>That you through learning another language are more able to understand other cultures and to interact with them.</p>

<p>som er positive og som andre kulturer kanskje kan lære noe av.</p> <p>Other cultures mind-set, ways of life, customs, etc.</p> <p>Traditions, especially. (Religion, food..)</p> <p>They should be aware of how others live, their cultures and views of life.</p> <p>They ought to learn about different ways of doing things in different parts of the world. History, music, behaviour...</p> <p>Should perhaps focus more on social skills than on detailed history knowledge</p>	<p>Hvordan bruke språket og kunnskapen om språk/kultur til å ta del i et internasjonalt samfunn. Lære et levende språk slik språket brukes nå, og ikke "it's raining cats and dogs".</p> <p>Kunne reflektere over egen rolle i nettbaserte/interkulturelle samfunn. Være stolt over å kunne kommunisere på tvers av språkbarrierer, og ikke skamme seg over at de "bare" kan engelsk som et fremmedspråk. Man trenger ikke kunne forstå Alex Ferguson for å være kompetent på kommunikasjon på engelsk. Selv ikke briter forstår Alex Ferguson ☺</p> <p>The influence language has on communicating cultural features and more</p> <p>Communication with other parts of the world through internet and skype??</p> <p>They should learn that this aspect is essential for a proper understanding of a text. I find that facts taken out of context often are meaningless.</p> <p>They should have a good grasp of the variety of culture and history within English speaking countries and respect for other cultures around the world.</p> <p>They should become familiar with all kinds of texts, films, music, etc. in order to find out about the richness and the variety of cultural expressions. Also to learn not to judge before they really know what they base their judgement on. Intercultural dimension means reading and trying to understand "the others".</p>
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4.4 Behavioural Questions

After having presented the group of respondents through the factual and attitudinal questions, I will now turn to the question regarding whether or not the respondents implement the intercultural dimension, thus analysing the answers given by the respondents. There is one behavioural question in the questionnaire.

It is important to underline that respondents cannot always tell you what they actually do; only what they believe they do. Sometimes we believe we do more or less than we truly do (Wray and Bloomer 155).

4.4.1 What do you do to promote intercultural competence in your English class?

It seems like all the respondents who answered the question in some way or another try to implement the intercultural dimension in their teaching. However, their answers indicate that they do so in various degrees, and from these answers I would suggest that in what way pupils are learning about intercultural aspects in many ways depend on the teacher they have.

The choices of materials also differ, varying from one's own personal experience to different types of media. It is also worth noticing that although the teachers to some degree seem to implement the intercultural dimension in their teaching, they are vague on *how* they implement it. Many of the respondents explain the materials they use, not how they use it.

<p>Using visual support (like films etc.) and supports international relations for my students</p> <p>Not as much as I used to when we were allowed to arrange student exchanges. We have participated in several Comenius projects. Mark and celebrate holidays and festivals</p> <p>Explain, point to history to show/explain the hows and whys, use literature, films, jokes</p> <p>My own experiences as a "world-citizen". I was born in Greenland, grew up in Denmark and have been travelling a lot. This as well as using history as a tool.</p> <p>We sometimes have discussions. We read texts about other places and people.</p> <p>Snakker om kulturelle likheter og forskjeller mellom engelskspråklige samfunn og det norske samfunnet, bruker youtube, engelskspråklige nettaviser og andre nettsteder for å belyse ulike kulturelle aspekter</p> <p>I teach from my experience (I lived in the USA 9 years). Use the books, the internet and other sources</p> <p>Part of the curriculum, learning by reading, debating, presenting different cultures, extracts from novels, short stories, news and films</p> <p>Focus on ways of life, on literature, music, films etc. – to the extent a very limited time allows!</p>
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Teach different accents and cultural awareness. Using music and other art forms.

I use the internet, books, newspapers, cds. The pupils can watch documentary films and talk about it. They get a topic open for discussion or they can make a presentation themselves.

Toleranse og respekt, åpenhet, men samtidig være bevisst sine egne meninger og holdninger som er positive og som andre kulturer kanskje kan lære noe av.

Because of its importance.

Many different things. Hard to specify, because it is part of many different topics.

Oral presentations and written tasks about themes from other subjects such as religion and history/geography

We put texts into context by looking at politics, culture, history that is required to get the broader understanding of the text. I have experienced that e.g. "youtube" is a fantastic tool for this.

Again by using history, texts, art and stories from different places. I also include the students' individual competence about where they come from.

Our textbook has a focus of this through several texts and tasks. We also spend a lot of time on discussing how other's live, and what we should think about when we travel to different countries.

There is a focus on respect and tolerance in all my lessons, not just in English

We read texts, listen to music, watch movies, discuss different topics. We try to learn about the situation both in different groups of people within our countries, in countries where we spend times on vacation and in parts of the world we rarely visit. And we try to compare and to understand different ways of life, religion and culture without using stereotypical ways of description.

We talk about culture - watch movies, discuss, read about other countries in class.

Discuss the way people live in English-speaking countries and Norway. Use digital tools.

Talk about different countries' history, food, music

I try to compare different traditions and give examples of social behaviour that differs from our own.

4.4.2 Additional comments

These additional comments underline what some of the respondents already stated above; that there is not enough time to work with the intercultural dimension of the English subject, and that when a choice has to be made regarding what to work with, formal competence and the obvious competence aims are often chosen. Also, the use of text books is mentioned, and how teachers might feel "tied down" by the books. These comments suggest that the will and wish to devote more time to the intercultural dimension is present, but that teachers are torn when it comes to what to focus on. After all, the competence aims and the testing of these are what are shown in the students' grades, thus representing the school's competence to the outside world.

I think we focus too much on oral proficiency and not enough on the rules of the language and the cultural background

Many teachers might feel “tied down” by the books they’re supposed to use, and don’t feel comfortable to think in new ways (like me sometimes). Perhaps text-books and tasks should be changed..?

Teaching English with a cultural dimension is very important, and interesting for both student and teacher!

That students find different cultural expressions exciting and that they all have friends from different parts of the world

I find that the more education I get, the better I teach, also in the lower classes.

5 Summary and Conclusion

I have interviewed 26 English teachers from all over Norway. Although the material is too diminutive to draw a definite conclusion from, it does imply some tendencies regarding the understanding and implementing of the intercultural dimension in lower secondary schools in Norway. The major findings from my research indicate that the intercultural dimension is indeed implemented in English language teaching in lower secondary schools in Norway, however they also point in the direction that to what extent it is implemented, and how it is implemented, to a large degree is dependent on the teacher.

Three teachers stated that they do not find the intercultural dimension important in language teaching. These three are among the teachers with no other relevant formal education. This seem to be the only common denominator, as they differ from 3-40 years in teaching experience, and all have 60 study points in English.

The 23 respondents who stated that they do find the intercultural dimension important all linked the importance to either personal growth and/or language learning, however when they were asked what, in their opinions, students should learn when it comes to the intercultural dimension the group was a bit more divided, and one respondent even answered that he/she did not know. Many respondents gave answers that did not connect to language learning or interaction, simply going back to traditional culture studies where one learns *about* a culture, not how to *interact* with a culture. This indicates firstly that there are teachers who are unsure about the intercultural dimension, and secondly that teachers confuse the two expressions. This sends signals that teachers who in their own belief teach intercultural aspects in reality do not teach what they think, which again sends signals that perhaps more focus should be put on the intercultural dimension also among teachers who are done with their teacher training.

The same tendency is traceable in the respondents' answers on how they promote intercultural competence in class. Quite a few respondents state that they use visual aids, literature, films etc., yet they do not explain *how* they connect this to teaching intercultural competence. Other respondents give thorough examples on how they implement the intercultural aspect, and also state that this is something they teach in all their classes, not just in English.

Both in their answers and in the additional comments some respondents point to the fact that there is too much focus on formal requirements and textbooks. It would have been interesting to have more information on this, but sadly I did not include questions regarding

this in my survey. The fact that respondents mention this, however, without being asked about it, indicates that this is a real challenge in the daily lives of an English teacher, and this presents a new research topic that might be very interesting; how do English teachers divide the little time given to teaching English to all the aspects that are to be included? How do they prioritize and why? I shall not pursue this any more in this thesis, but nevertheless I find it very interesting.

As previously stated, there is no definite conclusion to this study. There are however indications that suggest that although the intercultural dimension is implemented in teaching by English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway, the extent of them depend on the teacher. There are also indicators suggesting that many teachers feel there is not enough time to include this fully in their teaching.

A language is more than words; it is also social science, history and interaction. A language that is not being used is meaningless. It is therefore important to keep in mind that intercultural aspects and formal requirements should not be counterparts. Quite the opposite; they fulfil each other. In order to *learn* a language, the formal requirements are important in order to learn it correctly. In order to *use* a language, you need someone to talk to and something to talk about. Students with good factual knowledge will feel secure in communicating their knowledge to others. As they use a foreign language to share their factual knowledge, their linguistic skills will improve. This again will probably lead to a greater interest and motivation to use the language, hence formal requirements will also be in focus. As the linguistic skills improve, the student will accomplish communicating about more and more topics, and will also be able to talk about intercultural topics in the foreign language.

The main reason above all to learn a language is to be able to communicate with others. In order to achieve this one needs both formal competence and intercultural competence. It is important to know how to speak both grammatically and socially.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Letter to the Principals

Til rektor ved XX ungdomsskole

Vedrørende tillatelse til å sende ut spørreskjema til lærere i engelsk

Mitt navn er Hege Riiser, og jeg studerer ved masterprogrammet «Master i fremmedspråk, engelsk» som er et samarbeidsstudium mellom Høgskolen i Østfold, Göteborgs Universitet og Linnéuniversitetet. Som en del av min mastergrad skriver jeg denne terminen en masteroppgave der jeg forsker på hvordan det undervises i kulturdelen av engelskopplæringen i norske ungdomsskoler.

For å finne ut mer om dette er jeg avhengig av å finne ut hvordan lærere jobber med dette i klasserommene sine. Jeg ber derfor om tillatelse til at engelsklærerne ved din skole besvarer undersøkelsen ved at du videresender mailen til de aktuelle lærerne. Nedenfor finnes kort informasjon, samt en link til undersøkelsen som skal besvares på nett. Besvarelsen vil være anonym. Skolene som blir spurt om å delta er tilfeldig plukket ut.

Jeg er avhengig av at lærere svarer på denne undersøkelsen. Hvis du som rektor godkjenner at engelsklærerne ved skolen besvarer spørsmålene mine ber jeg om at alle oppfordres til å svare.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Hege Riiser

7.2 Appendix 2: Letter to the English Teachers

Til engelsklærere ved XX ungdomsskole

Mitt navn er Hege Riiser, og jeg studerer ved masterprogrammet «Master i fremmedspråk, engelsk» som er et samarbeidsstudium mellom Høgskolen i Østfold, Göteborgs Universitet og Linnéuniversitetet. Som en del av min mastergrad skriver jeg denne terminen en masteroppgave der jeg forsker på hvordan det undervises i interkulturell kommunikasjon og kompetanse i engelskundervisning i norske ungdomsskoler.

For å finne ut mer om dette er jeg avhengig av å finne ut hvordan lærere jobber med dette i klasserommene sine. Ved at du mottar denne mailen har din rektor godkjent din deltakelse i undersøkelsen. Din deltakelse vil være anonym.

Spørreundersøkelsen finner du på <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BYBBYLN>
Spørreundersøkelsen er på engelsk.

Takk for din deltakelse.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Hege Riiser

7.3 Appendix 3: The Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in my study on how English teachers in lower secondary schools in Norway include the intercultural dimension when teaching.

Data collected from this anonymous survey will be used in my master's thesis which is part of my master's degree in "Master i fremmedspråk i skolen/Nordiskt masterprogram". There are no risks or benefits for you from participating in this project. However, I sincerely hope that you will take the time to answer my questions, as my project depends on your participation. Please answer as fully as you can.

By completing and returning the questionnaire you give your consent to participate in my study. Depending on the findings in the questionnaires I might want to follow up with interviews with some of the respondents. These interviews will not in any way be linked to your personal answer from the questionnaire. Everything will be kept confidential and answers will be kept anonymous throughout the whole process. If you are willing to participate in an interview please leave your name and contact information in the indicated space below.

Thank you so much for your participation.

Any questions or concerns may be directed to Hege Riiser, hege.riiser@hiof.no

1. Contact information:

***2. Please state your gender and nationality.**

Male

Female

Nationality

***3. For how many years have you taught English?**

***4. What is your formal education in English? Please state your education and the year you finished your studies.**

5. Do you have any other formal education that might be relevant for my study? (Other languages, social science, history, religion etc.) Please state your education and the year you finished your studies.

***6. How big a percentage of the students you teach English have ethnic backgrounds other than Norwegian?**

***7. What does the term 'culture' mean to you?**

***8. What do you understand by teaching culture in your class?**

***9. What does the term 'intercultural competence' mean to you?**

***10. Do you consider the intercultural dimension an important part of teaching English? Yes/No? If your answer is yes, please answer questions 11, 12 and 13. If your answer is no, please move on to question 14.**

11. Why do you consider the intercultural dimension an important part of teaching English?

12. What do you do to promote intercultural competence in your English class?

13. In your opinion; what should students learn when it comes to the intercultural dimension of language teaching?

14. Do you have any additional comments?

Thank you for your participation!