

MASTEROPPGAVE

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH
PICTUREBOOKS: the case of *The Silence Seeker* and *The Island*

MARIA THERESA VEDDEGJERDE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis shows that high-quality multicultural picturebooks are well suited for teaching intercultural competence in primary school. To demonstrate how to teach intercultural competence through multicultural picturebooks, two teaching projects for 6th and 7th grade, based on the picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) are provided, and the advantages of using such literature to develop intercultural competence, based on reader-response theory and visual literacy, are discussed and justified.

With a strong focus on visual literacy and the interplay between words and illustrations in picturebooks, the thesis demonstrates how young students can experience the stories in a *living through*-, rather than *learning about*-perspective, by putting themselves in others' situations and seeing things from other perspectives. Moreover, multicultural picturebooks provide *mirrors* in which students can see themselves and identify with characters and situations in the stories, and *windows* through which they can see others and imagine how others live and feel. Because the visuals in picturebooks tell stories by showing, characters' emotions are depicted through e.g., facial expressions, body postures, and actions amplifying the characters' emotions, and the use of basic visual elements, such as colours, lines, and perspectives also reinforce emotions and moods in characters and situations.

In reader-response theory, the readers' experiences of the stories in a particular context are as important as the authors' motives and the text itself. Hence, by using the multicultural picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Moreley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) combined with classroom activities and tasks based on reader-response theory, opportunities for dialogues uncovering varied opinions and conflicts are provided, thus, leading to critical thinking and actions based on ethical reflections.

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It has been a great journey, but I suppose both my family and I are happy that it is finally over.

Maria Theresa Veddegjerde

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In the multicultural communities that many Norwegian schools are situated, and considering the increasing level of conflict between groups of people throughout the world, working with intercultural competence seems highly important. However, even though it is obvious that intercultural competence should play a significant role in the ESL primary school classroom, the curriculum gives few guidelines for which methods and materials to use (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). This thesis will demonstrate that using picturebooks as a basis for training is a very promising method to explore. In picturebooks, the visuals play a significant role in meaning-making, and by using a more image-based approach, with a strong focus on how text and illustrations work together to create meaning in the readers' minds, picturebooks seem well suited for aiding intercultural competence, because, when giving the students a "living through"-, not only a "learning about"-perspective when reading and exploring multicultural literature, intercultural competence could be acquired (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 311). Also, the visuals in picturebooks tell stories by showing, and when the characters' emotions are depicted through traits such as facial expressions, body postures, and actions, the characters' emotions are often amplified (Prior et al., 2012), and the use of basic visual elements, such as colours, lines, and perspectives could enhance the mood of the illustrations (Giorgis et al., 1999). Besides, when a story is told through an interaction between text and illustrations, leaving gaps to be filled by the reader, students' active participation in the story-making could promote emotional development, such as the ability to feel compassion and empathy (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). Furthermore, multicultural picturebooks of high quality could create *windows*, through which the students can see others, and *mirrors*, in which they can see themselves, which are important factors when developing intercultural competence (Stewart, 2015). Moreover, learning how to read visuals could increase the ability to make sense of the world, which is highly important when growing up in diverse communities, and in a world of increasing globalization (O'Neil, 2011).

The important position intercultural competence is given in *The Norwegian National Curriculum* (LK20), with human dignity, closely connected to human rights, as one of the most prominent issues, supports the relevance of teaching intercultural competence to young

learners (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The curriculum states that education and training shall “open doors to the world”, and encourage students to “think critically and act ethically”, and these goals are in line with the aim of this thesis, namely to develop young learners’ intercultural competence through improving their ability to see the world from different perspectives, to identify with other people, and to act critically and ethically in different situations (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Also supporting the importance of promoting intercultural competence in the classroom, is the central position the core elements “human dignity”, “critical thinking and ethical awareness”, and “democracy and participation” are given in the Educational Act (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Additionally, in the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship, being able to communicate with people from different societies and cultures regardless of linguistic or cultural belonging, and thus “promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices”, is emphasized (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

1.2. Thesis Statement and Research Question

With that in mind, this thesis will show that the multicultural picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) are well-suited as material for teaching intercultural competence in the ESL primary school classroom and that associated activities and dialogues, based on reader-response theory, with a strong focus on visual literacy and how picturebooks work, could promote intercultural competence in the primary school ESL classroom.

The research question is:

Could young students’ ability to see the world from different perspectives, the ability to identify with other people, and the ability to think critically be developed through using the high-quality multicultural picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* and *The Island*?

Suggestions for classroom activities connected to the selected literature will be outlined in two teaching plans as pre-, while-, and post-reading activities and the extent to which these activities could increase students’ ability to see the world from different perspectives, identify with other people, and think critically, will be discussed.

1.3. Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters, starting with the introduction, describing the background, and presenting the thesis statement and the research question in chapter one. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework is outlined, with a focus on intercultural competence, reader-response theory, and the development of intercultural competence through multicultural picturebooks. Chapter three gives an overview of the selected methods and materials, while chapter four presents the didactic framework. The fifth chapter contains a thorough discussion on the implementation of the didactics, before the summary and conclusion in chapter six.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Intercultural Competence

The term intercultural competence is frequently used both in steering documents and by several significant international organizations, such as UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the UN (the United Nations). Additionally, *The Common European Framework of References for Languages* promotes cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness as vital components of language learning (Council of Europe, 2001). The framework has laid the foundation for intercultural education, and in 2007 UNESCO developed guidelines for Intercultural Education, where one of the goals of acquiring intercultural competence is to make students become global citizens (Neuner, 2012). The goal of becoming global citizens is supported by the organizations Human Rights Education (HRE) and Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), which aim at creating a society where human rights and democracy are ensured. Furthermore, the definition of intercultural competence forms the core competencies for democratic citizenship and these competencies could “empower learners to take action in the world” (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 11).

One issue which has had a great impact on how intercultural competence is viewed today is non-verbal communication (Byram, 1997). Argyle (2013) identifies non-verbal signals in communication as “facial expressions”, “gaze”, “gestures and other bodily movements”, “posture”, “bodily contact”, “spatial behaviour”, “clothes and other aspects of appearance”,

“non-verbal vocalizations”, and “smell” (p. 1). Since there is great variation in how different cultures use non-verbal communication in speech, language teachers should be concerned with this issue when teaching intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

There have been numerous interpretations of intercultural competence in the last decades, and one definition, in particular, is adapted to educators, to make it easier to know how to incorporate the concept into daily teaching (Byram & Wagner, 2018). This definition highlights intercultural competence as a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills, realized through action, either individually or with others. The main goals are to “understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself”, to “respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people”, to “establish positive and constructive relationships with such people”, and to “understand oneself and one’s own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural ‘difference’” (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 7).

In this context, *respect* is explained as having a regard for, appreciating, and valuing the other, responding *appropriately* is meant to be understood as interacting within accepted norms, and to respond *effectively* means being able to achieve your goals. However, respect for others should never compromise human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, the three core principles of *The Council of Europe* and actions that violate these basic concepts should not be tolerated, even if explained as ‘cultural differences’ (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 2).

Furthermore, Barrett et al. emphasize the notion that a person’s intercultural competence could always be developed, thus, the goal of becoming an interculturally competent human being will never be completed (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 8).

Byram (1997) made an overview of five crucial elements in intercultural communication, which will be used as a foundation for the interpretation of intercultural competence for this thesis. Byram’s model seems appropriate because it takes into consideration also the social and cultural factors of foreign language teaching. According to Byram (1997), the idea was to make a ‘content-free’ model, comprehensible and useful for foreign language teaching (p. 31). In his model, Byram (1997) suggests that intercultural competence involves five related factors:

- Attitudes (*savoir-être*)
- Knowledge (*savoirs*)
- Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir-comprendre*)

- Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir-apprendre/-faire)
- Critical cultural awareness (savoir-s'engager)

A combination of the components in Byram's model seems to be important for developing intercultural competence, and as "knowledge" and "attitudes" lay the foundation of successful intercultural encounters, "skills of interpreting and relating", and "skills of discovery and interaction", are important to make the communication function well (Byram, 1997, p. 33). Additionally, "within a broader educational philosophy", teachers and other educators could "promote learner autonomy" and facilitate "critical cultural awareness" (Byram, 1997, p. 33).

2.1.1. Attitudes

One of the factors in Byram's model is attitudes. In an intercultural context, attitudes apply to people who belong to another social group, with different cultural meanings, beliefs, and behaviours. The kind of attitudes needed for an intercultural interaction to be successful is, according to Byram (1997), curiosity, openness, willingness to put aside disbelief and judgment of others, and to act respectfully towards others, even if they have different beliefs, meanings, and behaviours than oneself.

On the other hand, attitudes that are based on "demarcation and the establishment of distinct categories of properties and behaviour attributed to groups of persons" could lead to stereotyping, especially when the attitudes are driven by emotions and involve judgment (Neuner, 2012, p. 27). However, assumptions of how 'the others' are, do not need to be negative, and such generalizations could be necessary to make sense of the world. Anyhow, prejudice needs to be talked about and discussed, since both positive and negative prejudice can inhibit common understanding and mutual respect (Byram, 1997).

Another crucial element in Byram's model is the ability to "decentre", explained as the ability to see things from another person's perspective (Byram, 1997, p. 34). Byram (1997) has described the ability to decentre as "a willingness to suspend belief in one's own meaning and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging", attempting to change negative or prejudiced attitudes (p. 34). Although a total value-free interpretation of people or situations would be difficult, an awareness of one's own and others' values could prevent biased attitudes.

Attitudes are closely related to the other factors in Byram's model, i.e., knowledge, skills of interpretation, skills of discovery, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Regarding

the relation between attitudes and knowledge, a persistent belief has been that the more knowledge one has, the less prejudiced one is. However, the picture is more complex, and it seems difficult to change what has been learned and experienced since childhood (Byram, 1997). Concerning skills of interpretation and skills of discovery, the psychological stress level is lower, and if a person is open and curious, these skills could be employed more easily (Byram, 1997). Lastly, in an educational setting, critical cultural awareness could, according to Byram (1997), only be developed in an environment where the “relativisation of one’s own and valuing of others’ meanings, beliefs and behaviours” are reflected upon, and challenged regarding their creation and the context in which they occur (p. 35), which underscores the importance of having insight and a clear focus when working with these issues in the classroom.

2.1.2. Knowledge

Another crucial factor in Byram’s (1997) model is knowledge. One could divide this factor into knowledge about oneself and knowledge about others, into factual knowledge and knowledge of interactions, or into knowledge about individuals and knowledge about groups or societies (Byram, 1997).

While the focus so far mainly has been on becoming global citizens (Neuner, 2012), and the importance of developing competencies for democratic citizenship (Barrett, 2014), Byram’s (1997) model points out that in intercultural learning, knowledge about others is also knowledge about oneself. Hoff (2013) claims that personal development should be promoted in intercultural learning because knowing about oneself is a crucial factor in cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Furthermore, Hoff (2013) points out that recognizing the voices of both oneself and others is an important factor in “democratic experiences” (p. 30). Byram and Wagner (2018) explore this further and underscore the importance of knowing oneself and own society to be able to understand other people and other societies.

Regarding knowledge of facts versus knowledge of procedurals, Byram (1997) argues that declarative knowledge must be supplemented by procedural knowledge, i.e., knowing about something is not sufficient if one does not know “how to act in specific circumstances”, even if this knowledge is based on previous knowledge (p. 36). Furthermore, knowledge of the process of interaction with someone representing another culture or another country could also be on an individual or a societal level (Byram, 1997). Both these types of knowledge

would be important for an interaction to be successful, but whereas some knowledge is explicit and easy to recognize and interpret, some types of knowledge, including knowledge about concepts and processes in interaction, could be more hidden and difficult to access (Byram, 1997). Hence, working with different types of knowledge should be an obvious part of intercultural education, to ensure that intercultural learning takes place.

2.1.3. Skills

The third factor in Byram's model is *skills*. Byram (1997) differentiates between two types of skills, namely the "skill of interpreting and relating" and "the skill of discovery and interaction" (pp. 37-38). The former, "skills of interpreting and relating", is contingent on knowledge about one's own and others' conditions and entails how to interpret documents or events from other cultures and the ability "to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 61). Thus, the lack of social interaction does not require any pressure according to time. In the latter type, "skills of discovery and interaction", "interaction" demands the ability to interact socially, whereas "discovery" could be "operated in the individual's own time" (Byram, 1997, p. 37). Since an interaction takes place whenever the participants meet, one needs to be able to handle any dysfunctions or misinterpretations instantly.

In addition to the time aspect, *discovery* differs from *interpreting*, *relating*, and *interaction* regarding the requirement of prior knowledge, because where the other aspects are dependent on foregoing knowledge, "discovery comes into play when the individual has no, or only a partial existing knowledge framework" (Byram, 1997, p. 38). When building up the skill of discovery, individuals seek to find information and understanding about how the beliefs, meanings, and behaviours of others differ from their own beliefs, meanings, and behaviours (Byram, 1997). In the search for, and discovery of, new knowledge and understanding, attitudes of openness and curiosity are salient, as well as being able to recognize phenomena in various circumstances and relate them to other phenomena (Byram, 1997).

Lastly, skills of interaction also comprise the ability to mediate in interactions between people of contrasting values and beliefs (Byram & Wagner, 2018). Byram and Wagner (2018) emphasize the importance of using intercultural skills and attitudes when mediating and argues further that this requires the skill of decentring, as mentioned above.

2.1.4. Critical Cultural Awareness

The last factor in Byram's (1997) intercultural competence model is *critical cultural awareness*. Byram (1997) claims that a certain amount of the acquisition of intercultural competence happens in educational settings, and by helping students to identify, interpret, evaluate, and analyze documents and situations, and to guide them when interacting and mediating in intercultural exchanges, the students could develop *critical cultural awareness*, defined as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 53).

Byram and Wagner (2018) have later described *critical cultural awareness* as the ability to "apply what they [the students] learn to analyze the world around them and make critical judgments based on specific evidence" (p. 148). The objectives in education when promoting critical cultural awareness should, according to Byram (1997), include identification and interpretation of values in own and others' cultures, evaluation of documents and events referring to explicit perspectives and criteria, and interaction and mediation in intercultural exchanges. Additionally, Byram and Wagner (2018) argue that to stimulate critical thinking skills at the same time as teaching new knowledge about the world, using a more holistic approach with content that is relevant to the students and the society, would be beneficial.

2.1.5. Culture

A key concept in the definition of intercultural competence is culture. Because culture belongs to individuals in heterogeneous groups, and because the practices and rules within the groups often are disputed, defining culture could be difficult (Barrett et al., 2014). Thus, culture is not a static unit, but changeable with blurred boundaries. However, one way to define culture is to divide it into three aspects, namely "material", "social" and "subjective" (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 5). In this regard, *material* involves artefacts, such as foods and clothes, *social* involves a group's institutions, such as rules, language, law, and cultural icons, and *subjective* involves attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, discourses, and practices (Barrett et al., 2014).

Another way to define culture is to divide it into visible and invisible signs, where visible signs are the artefacts that could be easily spotted, such as language, art, dress, and food, and invisible signs are more hidden artefacts, such as values and attitudes (Hall, 1981). Culture

could be visualized as an iceberg, where the tip of the iceberg shows the “visible signs” and the part being under the sea manifests the “invisible signs” (Neuner, 2012, p. 18).

Hofstede et al. (2010) use the analogy of how computers are programmed when describing a person’s learned patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. Hofstede et al. (2010) argue that culture is not inherited, but learned, and describe culture as part of a pyramid where each layer depicts different levels or “mental programs” (pp. 5-6). The pyramid's bottom layer consists of genetic inherited universal feelings, or “physical and basic psychological functioning”, such as feeling fear, anger, sadness, joy, love, and shame and the second level of the pyramid depicts the cultural aspect (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). Hofstede et al. (2010) further claim that culture is always collective because the culture is learned within a social group, described as “the unwritten rules of the social game” (p. 6). At the top of the pyramid, the personality of an individual is placed, and according to Hofstede et al. (2010), an individual’s personality is partly inherited, through the individual’s distinctive genes, and partly learned, through culture.

Furthermore, Hofstede et al. (2010) compare cultural differences to the layers of an onion. In this comparison, *symbols* manifest the outer layer, explained as the more superficial part of a culture, and *values* manifest the inner layer, explained as the deepest part. In between *values* and *symbols* are *rituals* and *heroes*. Both *rituals*, *heroes*, and *symbols* are, according to Hofstede et al., (2010) visible practices. *Discourse*, “the way language is used in text and talk, in daily interaction, and in communicating beliefs” (p. 9), is also included in rituals.

2.2. Reader-Response Theory

A central topic to investigate when using literature to develop students’ intercultural competence in primary school, is how literary texts are received by the students. In the following, reader-response theory, based on Iser’s (1974) reception theory, Rosenblatt’s (1978, 1982) theories of the role of the reader and the importance of taking different reading stances when reading different kinds of texts, and the work of Sipe (1999), regarding children’s responses to literature, will be explored.

Initially, in Iser’s (1974) reception theory, the stance was that the text had no meaning without the reader, and the idea that there are close relationships between the reader, the author, and the text was emphasized. However, in the studies of Sipe (1999), a fourth part was added to the meaning-making, namely the context in which the text is embedded. According to Iser

(2000), the question should be what a text could mean to potential readers, in different settings, rather than what it means in itself, hence a teacher needs to take each student's interpretation into account, rather than try to find one correct understanding or answer. Furthermore, the idea that different kinds of texts can evoke different emotions in different readers is also contingent on the reader's "intertextual connections", i.e., connections between different texts familiar to the reader, and "personalizing connections", i.e., connections to own life (Sipe, 1999, p. 121).

Furthermore, literary texts could also be evaluated in relation to how they are read. According to Rosenblatt (1982), different texts could encourage different kinds of reading approaches, such as "efferent" and "aesthetic" reading strategies (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 271). In efferent reading, the reader needs "to focus on extracting the public meaning of the text", i.e., seeking information and directions in the text, or draw logical conclusions from the text, while in aesthetic reading, the reader must "draw on more of the experiential matrix", involving personal emotions and connections to the world (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 271). When using literature to enhance students' intercultural competence, the focus would be on aesthetic reading, since intercultural competence is more than acquiring knowledge about another culture. As mentioned previously, intercultural competence also includes skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997), hence, the reading should aim to engage students on a personal and emotional level. To achieve readers' engagement, the teacher could guide the students to "direct their attention to the qualitative responses going on during the reading itself" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 40). Rosenblatt (1978) explains "qualitative responses" as the readers' "experienced meaning", i.e., how each reader experiences a text, rather than seeking information, directions, or logical conclusions (p. 38). For this thesis, aiming for intercultural learning by using multicultural picturebooks, the focus will mainly be on aesthetic reading, but without rejecting students' possible efferent approaches.

Sipe (1999) adds to the picture the role of the author and claims that "children display interest in what authors (and illustrators) intend" (p. 121), and that this interest could be productive for literary comprehension and appreciation. To stimulate curiosity about the authors' motives, Sipe (1999) suggests methods for questioning the authors as if they were present. Furthermore, Sipe (1999) asks if the authors' ideological and sociological stances could affect the readers' interpretations of a text.

As mentioned earlier, the most important component in reader-response theory, in addition to the text, is the reader, because the essence of reader-response theory is how readers make

meaning of texts (Harkin, 2005). In other words, reader-response theory tries to explain how readers respond to the text, and the reading process is described as “a transaction between the reader and the text” where the readers’ reactions to personal experiences or known ideas are being brought to the fore in the readers’ minds (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 27). This view is supported by Iser (1974), who claims that the meaning of a text could only exist through the subjective interpretation of a reader, and literary communication appears through this reader-text interaction.

Sipe (1999) gives some examples of pleasures that children might find in literature, such as “intertextual connections”, i.e., when they recognize similarities with other texts, and “comparison to their own lives”, i.e., when they recognize similarities with something they have experienced themselves (p. 124). Additionally, children often appreciate when their own culture is mirrored or when they are puzzled, shocked, or taken by surprise (Sipe, 1999). The importance of recognition and emotional reactions are highlighted in Iser’s (1974) reception theory, unmistakably evident where he claims that “Expectations [are] aroused in the reader by allusions to the things he knows or thinks he knows”, continuing that such expectation “initiates the act of imagination by which the reader makes the virtual actual” (p. 37). In this process, the reader takes place in the story by imagining, recreating, or reliving, episodes in the text as if they were episodes in the reader’s own life (Iser, 1974). However, at the same time as the readers’ experience of the text will reflect their disposition, and act as a mirror, the reality created in the reading process will be different from the readers’ own reality and act as a window through which the world could be observed (Iser, 1974). When reading texts in class, there might be students that will resist certain texts, while others will accept, or even embrace, the same texts (Sipe, 1999). These responses could either be individually shaped or shaped by culture, and the teacher’s role would be to help the students explore the pleasure of literature, despite possible immediate rejections (Sipe, 1999).

Based on the idea that students react differently to the same texts, and that it would be impossible to predict or decide how the students will receive, or experience, a text, one way to work with texts in class could be to evaluate if the students ignore clues or details in the texts, or if they add elements that are not present (Rosenblatt, 1978). This method has been called “the transactional view” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 137), used to “reinforce interest in the dynamics of the relationship between the author, the text, the reader, and their cultural environments” (p. 174). According to Iser’s analysis, different texts could generate multiple different meanings, continuously readjusted and reconstructed, according to expectations (Shi, 2013).

By using “the transactional view” as a foundation when reading literary texts in the classroom, ample opportunities for dialogue and discussions could emerge (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 137).

In addition to discussing the role of the text, the author, and the reader, the role of the context in literary meaning-making should be mentioned. Firstly, what kind of responses, referential or affective, would be appropriate could in many cases be decided by the context (Iser, 2000). In the primary school classroom, the teacher, as part of the context, plays an important role when clarifying expectations and learning objectives (Iser, 2000). Secondly, in reception theory, the relationship between the text and the context is crucial when explaining how the reader is making sense of literature, and what kind of questions arise in the readers’ minds (Iser, 2000). The prevailing opinion seems to be that “literature answers the questions arising out of the systems of its environment”, meaning that if the same text were read by the same readers in different contexts, different questions would arise, and thereby, the reading could result in different answers and interpretations (Iser, 2000, p. 312). Thirdly, immediate contexts, like the classroom community and different out-of-school contexts (i.e., the library, the community center, among friends) could influence the way a text is perceived and interpreted, in addition to gender expectations, diverse cultural backgrounds, and the popular culture surrounding us, such as television, news media, music and movies (Sipe, 1999), and in last two decades, also social media.

Iser (1974) claimed that for a reader to be personally engaged in a text “he must actively participate in bringing out the meaning” (p. 30) and that the “participation of the reader could not be stimulated if everything were laid out in front of him” (p. 31). Therefore, authors tend to create gaps where the “narrative breaks off, so that the reader has room to enter into it” (Iser, 1974 p. 38). In this way, by hiding important events in the text, and by giving the readers a chance to add something to the story, authors invite them into the meaning-making. Additionally, this secrecy could make the readers more alert and aware (Iser, 1974). Furthermore, according to Shi (2013), it is in the interaction between the reader and the literary text meaning is created. One example of this process could be if the narrative suddenly breaks off and sets out from another perspective, leaving the readers to connect the perspectives by adding their interpretation of what happened between the events, based on textual clues (Shi, 2013). Thus, without these gaps, there would not have been any possibilities for personal interpretations or additions, and the collaboration between text and reader would not have existed (Shi, 2013).

The idea that reading is a combination of the writer's or illustrator's intentions, and that the readers participate actively in filling the gaps, based on information in the text and their creativity, will lead to different interpretations and understandings of the same text.

Consequently, teachers must encourage different interpretations based on textual clues, rather than searching for one correct answer or literary truth.

It should be added that gaps in the text mainly apply to aesthetic reading, where the focus is on what happens within the reader during the reading, rather than to efferent reading, where the point is to find answers to be performed or tested after the reading (Rosenblatt, 1978).

2.3. Intercultural Competence through Multicultural Picturebooks

2.3.1. Multicultural Literature

According to Bista (2012), multicultural literature focuses on the reality of people from different non-mainstream cultural backgrounds, including people of different races, colours, and values (pp. 317-318). Iway (2019) underscores the importance of using literary works about “underrepresented” groups, while Mestre and Scott (1997) focus on the importance of reflecting “diverse life experiences, traditions, histories, values, worldviews, and perspectives of the diverse cultural groups that make up a society” in literature (p. 185).

The significance of including multicultural literature in the curriculum is emphasized in an article by Louie (2005), where the aim is to develop students' empathetic responses by using multicultural literature. Louie (2005) argues that for the students to be able to understand people from different parts of the world, sometimes with other cultural values than theirs, the curriculum should contain literature that reflects different cultures. Louie (2005) explains empathy as an active attempt to understand another person, either cognitively, based on information, or emotionally, based on the other person's feelings (Louie, 2005). Furthermore, Louie (2005) claims that multicultural literature “provides a gateway through which readers can enter into the characters' world from the vantage point of the author” (p. 566). Colby and Lyon (2004) support the idea that multicultural literature should play a crucial part in the curriculum and refer to children's need for characters and situations with which they can identify. Moreover, the literature read in school should reflect the students' lives in some way or the other, and through this recognition, the students will engage more in the reading

process and are given “opportunities to celebrate who they are while learning about others” (Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 26).

A goal when using multicultural literature in education could be to develop “cross-cultural empathy”, which, according to Louie (2005), means to be able to “step away from one’s self-centered approach of interpretation and work with others’ beliefs and values to explain what others think and do” (p. 567), also called “decentring” (p. 568). However, the ability to decentre, or to develop cognitive or emotional empathy, is difficult and requires sufficient common ground, where the need for information about worlds that are different from one’s own is pivotal (Louie, 2005).

Another important issue when using multicultural literature in the classroom is to select literature that is suitable and that serves the aims and objectives of the curriculum. In an article about multicultural literature for children and young adults, Bista (2012) focuses on the authors and claims that to be able to write multicultural literature of high quality, two main criteria must be fulfilled, namely *authority* and *authenticity*. To show *authority*, Bista (2012) explains that the authors must be in full control of the plot and the characters and be able to make the reader believe that they know the culture from the inside. When talking about *authenticity*, Bista (2012) refers to literature written by authors who are members of the ethnic group they are depicting (called *insiders*). According to Bista (2012), in a determinist view, only *insiders* are entitled to write about a specific culture, because members of the ethnic group would have to “speak for themselves” (p. 320), and because they are “less likely to use stereotypes” (p. 321). However, *insiders* could also misconceive the different facets of a culture, and thereby give an incorrect cultural picture (Bista, 2012). Notwithstanding, when people who are not members of the ethnic group they are depicting (called *outsiders*) write multicultural literature, the possibility that “the *outsiders* sometimes overestimate the power of imagination to cross cultural gaps” is present (Bista, 2012, p. 319). Furthermore, Bista (2012) claims that it is almost impossible for an *outsider* to fully understand all the aspects of a culture and, therefore, there is a risk of reinforcing stereotypes.

Nevertheless, according to Bista (2012), it could be argued that the only thing an author needs to be able to depict other cultures truthfully is “common human experiences”, and that because we are all human, we should be able to understand how people from other cultures think and feel (Bista, 2012, p. 321). However, Bista (2012) concludes that it is important that authors of multicultural literature, both *insiders* and *outsiders*, require “sufficient knowledge

of the subject matter through experience or genuine research of the other culture” realized through imagination and adequate writing skills (p. 323). Otherwise, authors of multicultural literature “may unconsciously impose their own cultural beliefs and values on the culture they try to recreate, exhibit, and locate in any fictional texts” (Bista, 2012, p. 323).

Although there seems to be agreement on the positive effects of using multicultural literature of high quality in education, exposure to multicultural literature without any guidance from educators could have the opposite effect, and rather than building empathy, the students could dissociate from the characters in the text, as a result from a lack of understanding (Louie, 2006). Hence, if one wants students to develop intercultural competence from reading multicultural literature, teaching effective reading strategies would be necessary (Louie, 2006). Louie (2006) gives some suggestions for suitable reading strategies for students in primary and lower secondary schools. Firstly, the authenticity of the story should be checked, to determine historical and cultural accuracy. Secondly, better to understand the world of the ethnic characters, one should examine the context in which the story is told. Thirdly, teachers should help the students to see the world from other perspectives, “considering how characters’ motives and reactions might not be like the ones the students would have” (Louie, 2006, p. 439). Additionally, because conflicts often bring people’s values into the open, teachers might help students identify conflicts and uncover the values upon which the characters’ decisions and actions are made. Furthermore, Louie (2006) suggests that students should consider if ethnic characters would “approve of the way they are portrayed in books and other types of media” (pp. 439-440), and, to build up a broader understanding of the text genre, teachers could use different culture’s versions of the same story. Lastly, to help students understand the complex, multicultural world in which they live, talking, writing, and responding to multicultural literature during the reading, is highly recommended, both to allow students to express themselves and to give them opportunities to discuss their beliefs and attitudes regarding the literature they have read (Louie, 2006).

2.3.2. Picturebooks

One could think that picturebooks are any sort of illustrated books, however, there are certain criteria to meet the requirements of the definition. Most importantly, text and pictures must work actively together to create meaning (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), where the interplay between words and pictures makes the picturebook something more than “a book which happens to have pictures” (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007, p. 273). According to

Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), “Pictures in picturebooks are complex iconic signs, and words in picturebooks are complex conventional signs” (p. 1). An iconic sign is a direct representation of its signified, with the function to describe or represent, whereas a conventional sign has no direct relationship with its signifier and needs a code to be interpreted. Conventional signs, or words, are there to narrate, most often in a linear way, whereas iconic signs, or pictures, are predominantly nonlinear, with no direction or instruction of how to be read (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). The relationship between iconic and conventional signs in picturebooks is closely related to textual gaps in reader-response theory, where words and pictures can fill each other's gaps, but also leave gaps to be filled by the reader (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Such textual gaps, either within the text, or between text and pictures, could prompt individual thinking to fill in additional information and make children take a stance, think critically, and enable them to change perspectives (Arizpe & Styles, 2016).

The process of reading a picturebook could be like a hermeneutic circle, starting with the whole, then looking at details, before going back to the whole with a deeper comprehension (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Sometimes the pictures support the text, sometimes they contradict the text, and sometimes they tell parallel stories. Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) use the categories *symmetrical picturebooks*, where words and pictures are telling two independent stories, *complementary picturebooks*, where words and pictures are filling each other's gaps, *expanding picturebooks*, where the verbal narrative depends on the visual, and the visual narrative depends on the verbal, *sylleptic picturebooks* (with or without words), containing two or more narratives that are independent of each other, and *counterpointing picturebooks*, where the verbal and the visual are mutually dependent. In the case of the latter category, *counterpointing picturebooks*, the author and the illustrator must work closely together, because words and pictures are filling each other's gaps.

The reading process is complex, and as children read “they are looking at the whole picture and connecting it to the words, as well as seeing through the characters' eyes and trying to pull all this information together”, and in this process of deduction, both imagination and logic are involved (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, pp. 26-27). There is no proof, however, that struggling readers of words are poor readers of visuals, but rather that some of them can read pictures quite well (Arizpe & Styles, 2016). Additionally, the vast number of illustrations in picturebooks, and the often repetitive and sometimes somewhat simple language, could encourage reluctant readers to participate both in the reading process and in subsequent group and class discussions (Tørnby, 2020). Nevertheless, it can be difficult for inexperienced

readers to express their understanding of the interplay between words and pictures, and they seem more likely to provide less plausible explanations, while more experienced readers are more likely to give explanations that are logically founded (Arizpe & Styles, 2016). Because picturebooks can provide a combination of “intellectual challenge, aesthetic pleasure, amusement and intriguing ‘puzzles’ to unravel”, the interplay between the intellect and emotions is essential, and the ability to read emotions from pictures and showing empathy with depicted characters could be triggered (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p. 36).

Many picturebooks are created for a dual audience (both children and adults), and the effect of different counterpoints is important for communication on different levels (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). The variation in counterpoints is extensive, including *counterpoint in address*, leaving gaps to be filled differently by children and adults, *counterpoint in style*, where words could be ironic while pictures are non-ironic (or vice versa), *counterpoint in genre or modality*, where words and pictures are contrasting reality and fantasy, *counterpoint by juxtaposition*, containing two or more parallel visual stories, sometimes supported by words, *counterpoint in perspective* (or point of view), contrasting who is speaking and who is seeing, *counterpoint in characterization*, where irony or ambiguity is created by portraying characters differently in words and pictures, *counterpoint of a metafictional nature*, expressing notions in words that are impossible to express in pictures (e.g., metaphors treated literally in pictures), *counterpoint in paratext*, introducing contradictory elements to the book itself in titles, covers, title pages, or endpapers, and *counterpoint in space and time*, where spatiotemporal relations are colliding (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Because pictures are mimetic (i.e., communicating by showing) and words are diegetic (i.e., communicating by telling), words and pictures can never fully coincide in spatiotemporal relations (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

Furthermore, the significance of paratexts, and how postmodern picturebooks play with paratexts and paratextual conventions, seems important for the interpretation of picturebooks. According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2006), paratexts “frequently carry a substantial percentage of the book’s verbal and visual information” (p. 256). One paratextual feature of great importance is the format, which is part of the picturebook’s “aesthetic whole” (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 241). Another important feature is the cover, where the title and the cover picture are playing important parts in the text-image relationship (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Often the cover is the reason why a book is chosen or rejected by children. The cover picture could provide information about the story’s most dramatic or appealing event, in addition to saying something about the genre and addressee (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), and

most importantly, covers could awake readers' expectations about the story (Nodelman, 1996). Additionally, endpapers, title pages, and back-covers contribute to a story in different ways by playing crucial parts in e.g., establishing scenes, or anticipating the plot (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

An important reason for using picturebooks in education is that children respond to such literature in ways that could promote literary understanding (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). Literary understanding could, according to Driggs Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007), be triggered by the interaction between *the hermeneutic impulse*; the desire to know, *the personal impulse*; the need to connect stories to own life, and *the aesthetic impulse*; the need to experience the world of the story as if they were there and use it as inspiration for own creativity. Another reason for using picturebooks in education is that when young readers make intertextual connections and connections to real-life their literary understanding increases (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). This notion is supported by Campagnaro (2021) who claims that from the picturebook “arises questions which children have to deal with, it invites them to fill semantic gaps, it rouses their intellectual curiosity and aesthetic pleasure, it stimulates their imagination because of the appealing use of visual metaphors” (p. 2).

Accordingly, *the New Norwegian Curriculum for English* focuses on deep learning and aesthetic approaches to learning (Tørnby, 2020). Deep learning could be attained through experiences that lead to transformation, and this transformation could be achieved by learning through our senses (Tørnby, 2020). Furthermore, when working aesthetically with picturebooks children engage their senses through *the aesthetic impulse* and *the personal impulse*, in addition to *the hermeneutic impulse* (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007), and “the process of working aesthetically equips pupils with a wide range of learning processes as well as ‘new knowledge’” (Tørnby, 2020, p. 22).

Additionally, reading picturebooks could be a good tool for developing empathy, firstly, because the brain changes when reading literature, and therefore the understanding of others could also change, and, secondly, because reading literature could develop emotional literacy (Tørnby, 2020). In picturebooks, emotions are primarily depicted through illustrations, however, emotions could also be conveyed through written text (Tørnby, 2020). Tørnby (2020) claims that “Reading an extensive selection of picturebooks will assist children in navigating the dissimilar and at times challenging landscapes of emotions, thus helping them

to understand these and mature into balanced, caring teenagers” (p. 140). Moreover, Driggs Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) argue for using picturebooks in “future teaching, learning, and research”, claiming that picturebook authors aim to develop readers emotionally e.g., by increasing their “self-understanding” and “finding [their] place in the world” (p. 280). This notion is supported by Arizpe and Styles (2016), who claim that by reading picturebooks children could become more knowledgeable and tolerant of other cultures and customs, in addition to understanding their own cultural identity. Moreover, reading and interpreting picturebooks could promote a better understanding of migration and intercultural issues (Arizpe & Styles, 2016).

2.3.3. Visual Literacy

In picturebooks, illustrations carry meaning alongside the text, and the readers’ ability to read pictures is as important for text comprehension as the words (O’Neil, 2011). The term ‘visual literacy’ was first applied in 1969 (Debes & Williams, 1969). However, at the time, the term was very extensive and often misleading, embracing too many underlying concepts, and the need for a more palpable definition was evident (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). Some years later, Debes and Williams (1978) defined visual literacy as “the intentional use of culturally acquired signs in culturally established patterns for the purpose of communication” (Debes & Williams, 1978, cited in Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997, p. 285). Subsequently, the term was divided into three categories: Body language, object language, and sign and symbol language (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). Later, a fourth category was included, namely abstract language elements, such as graphic elements constituted by “colour, light and shadow, line and flow of movement, juxtaposition of items, perspective, and relative size of items” (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997, p. 286). Visual literacy has later been defined in a less complex, and perhaps more comprehensible way, as “the ability to construct meaning from visual images” (Giorgis et al., 1999, p. 146).

According to Avgerinou and Ericson (1997), the visual design consists of the basic visual elements “line, shape, direction, tone, colour, scale, dimension, and movement” (p. 286), while Giorgis et al. (1999) operate with the elements “use of line”, “use of colour”, “use of perspective”, “use of technique”, “use of texture”, and “use of composition and design” (pp. 146-152). “Use of line” could, according to Giorgis et al. (1999), suggest a direction, show movement, create energy, define objects, or suggest emotional responses. Giorgis et al. (1999)

further claim that “Color is one of the most emotionally evocative artistic elements” (p. 148), and that while hot colours, like red or orange, might suggest excitement, cold colours, like blue or green, might represent calmness. Regarding the use of black and white, a distinct period, specific story content, or tone, could be established (Giorgis et al., 1999).

Furthermore, illustrators’ use of perspective could influence readers’ emotions or their stance towards characters. The use of perspective could also increase readers’ attachment to the story, or the illustrator could simply wish to share a view with the readers (Giorgis et al., 1999).

Another way of utilizing visual elements is to use different techniques combined with media, such as watercolours, torn paper, computer-generated graphics, or textual imagery e.g., created from objects from nature (Giorgis et al., 1999). Illustrations may also have varied textures made from layering techniques applied with e.g., watercolours, oil paint, or pastels (Giorgis et al., 1999). The last visual element mentioned by Giorgis et al. (1999), is the more general use of composition and design to create a holistic expression, such as layout, text placement, typeface, bookjackets, use of borders, and paper quality.

Avgerinou and Ericson (1997) describe visual elements by using seven basic design principles, namely “arrangement, balance, colour, dynamism, emphasis, fidelity, and graphic harmony” (p. 286). Their idea is that when analyzing an image, to perceive, understand, and judge visual elements, learners go through four phases of involvement (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). In the first phase, they describe the graphic elements of the image, in the second phase, they analyze the arrangement of the elements, in the third phase, they interpret the communicated messages, and in the fourth phase, the aesthetic appreciation of the image is considered (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997).

Prior et al. (2012) exemplify how to use visual literacy to study characters, and argue that visual elements lend themselves to expressing information about characters, through “pictorial content”, such as “facial expressions”, “body postures”, “characters’ actions”, “symbols”, and “pictorial devices”, such as “colour and line”, “size”, “the position of characters within the illustration”, and “the breaking of frames” surrounding the characters (Prior et al., 2012, pp. 200-202). Prior et al. (2012) conclude that even if the children had prior knowledge of how to use some visual elements, like facial expressions, body postures, and characters’ actions, to take full advantage of visual information and clues in a text, visual literacy must be taught.

The view that visual literacy should be part of literary education is supported by Avgerinou and Ericson (1997), who argue that visual literacy must be taught, equivalent to verbal literacy, and that teaching visual literacy in school could increase the ability to make sense of the world. Moreover, the ability to read pictures seems particularly important when the pictures “carry a parallel story that expands or contradicts the one told in words alone”, in other words, when the pictures are establishing the story, meaning that the story would change or disappear without the pictures (O’Neil, 2011, p. 216).

There are many ways in which visual literacy could be taught, and the following examples are taken from O’Neil’s (2011) article on the development of visual literacy. Firstly, O’Neil (2011) suggests teaching culturally associated colours, such as red for warm and blue for cold. Secondly, working on translating visuals into words is recommended, by including components of pictures and style, such as combinations of colours, lines, and shape e.g., to express feelings (O’Neil, 2011). Thirdly, comparing illustrations to practice analysis and critical thinking are suggested, and fourthly, activities that combine written and visual literary skills, like writing various captions, are proposed (O’Neil, 2011). Another method for developing visual literacy skills is exploring “composition as a method for defining characters and their relationship with one another”, to show how the placement of characters and other elements could indicate relationships (O’Neil, 2011, p. 220). Furthermore, to help students to distinguish between information given by written text and information given by pictures, a two-column chart is recommended, where one column is for information only conveyed by visuals and the other for information only conveyed by words (O’Neil, 2011). O’Neil (2011) argues that this exercise could help students to understand the importance of reading pictures for comprehension and interpretation. Lastly, O’Neil (2011) proposes an activity where the students draw a map of the adventures of one of the characters in the story, aiming to “support their growing awareness of how image can provide all the detail needed for a good story”, in addition to modelling illustrative language, such as hard, sharp, wide, or blurry (p. 222).

The above-mentioned activities are only suggestions, and other activities could serve the same purpose, which is to develop students’ competence with images, something that, according to Lewis (2001), is “a prerequisite of competence in life”, based on the fact that “Their [children’s] world is saturated with images, moving and still, alone and in all manner of hybrid combinations with text and sounds” (pp. 59-60).

2.3.4. Previous Research

The number of empirical studies investigating the benefits of using multicultural picturebooks to enhance students' intercultural competence in primary school is scarce. However, some small-scale studies have been conducted, both in Norway, in the UK, and the USA. Some of these studies will now be investigated to elucidate the extent to which the use of multicultural picturebooks could have a positive effect on intercultural learning in the ESL classroom.

In a small-scale study from 2019, carried out in a lower secondary school class in Norway, the aim was to find out more about how dialogues can foster intercultural learning, either through dialogic activities or through readers' dialogues with texts representing their own or another culture (Heggernes, 2019). Heggernes (2019) stresses that dialogues, and dialogic talk, require both openness to others and respect for difference. By using the novel, *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* by Peter Sis (2014), a hybrid between picturebook and graphic novel, Heggernes seeks to find out more about which features of dialogue seem to be conducive to intercultural learning and how teachers can facilitate students' dialogues. The study shows that with a respectful exploration of ideas, where teachers thoughtfully guide the dialogue by using open-ended questions, students can be assisted from a literal to a metaphorical understanding of text and pictures (Heggernes, 2019). Furthermore, students' conflicting experiences might be transformed into intercultural learning by using and mediating knowledge about dialogic features (Heggernes, 2019). Conclusively, Heggernes (2019) argues that intercultural learning might take place when the students try to solve a problem through listening to others, asking for help, changing their minds, and seeing things from other perspectives.

Reader-response and dialogic theory issues are further explored in a primary school study from 2014, where the aim was to show how intercultural competence could be developed in multicultural classrooms by integrating visual methodologies in creative responses, such as drawing, when responding to multimodal texts, such as picturebooks (Arizpe et al., 2014). As in the above-mentioned study by Heggernes (2019), the importance of asking open-ended questions and not providing ready-made answers in discussions is emphasized. In Arizpe et al.'s (2014) study, however, the focus is on how multimodal texts about migration and journeys, if using visual strategies for reading and responding, can provide a "living through", not only "knowledge about", culture and cultural experiences (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 311). The researchers in this study anticipated that using an "image-based approach" when working with visual texts can aid intercultural learning (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 304). Arizpe et al.

(2014) conclude that “students in this project made links between their own lives and those of others” and that by “sharing their responses to the texts” intercultural awareness was encouraged (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 306).

Another small-scale study about intercultural learning in the classroom, relying on reader-response theory and the use of dialogues, was carried out in the UK with a group of 9–10-year-olds (Evans, 2018). In this study, the aim was to investigate the extent to which tolerance, empathy, and awareness of human rights could be fostered through reading and responding to a set of picturebooks about migration, focusing on how it would be to flee your country because of war (Evans, 2018). In the study, the students were encouraged to read from a critical perspective, aiming to “see that behind the experience of every migrant or refugee is a personal story, each told from a different perspective and viewpoint depending on who is reporting the story” (Evans, 2018, p. 784). Evans (2018) reports that the students responded to the picturebooks with complex questions, such as “are they moving by choice or are they being forced to move?”, “Do migrants feel free?”, and “What is freedom?”, showing that they were able to read critically (Evans, 2018, p. 789). Evans (2018) concludes that “certain picturebooks about migration [can] help to deepen children’s understanding of the plights of migrants and in so doing nurture tolerance, empathy and an awareness of human rights” (Evans, 2018, p. 784).

Additionally, in a descriptive study from the USA, examining a group of 9th and 10th-grade students’ reader-responses to multicultural picturebooks, one of the aims was to show how new perspectives could be acquired (Stewart, 2015). One of the hypotheses in this study is that teachers and students could learn from each other’s experiences, requiring a description of - “classroom positions, strategies, and materials that will prompt dialogic or reciprocal learning” (Stewart, 2015, p.150). Results from the study indicate that students could acquire literacy skills from reading and responding to multicultural picturebooks, but more importantly, that they could learn something new through literature, including the ability to take new perspectives (Stewart, 2015). Moreover, according to Stewart (2015), to aid young students’ intercultural learning, multicultural picturebooks could be used to learn through own and others’ experiences, and in that case, the literature functions both as a window, through which you can see others, and a mirror, in which you can see yourself. Thus, “cross-cultural understandings for students and teachers” will be promoted (Stewart, 2015, p. 151).

In conclusion, previous research on the use of multicultural picturebooks in the ESL classroom shows that methods based on reader-response and dialogical theories could

promote and enhance intercultural learning. Even though the above-mentioned studies are small-scale, the fact that the results agree indicates that they are reliable. However, more research in this field is needed to supplement the current studies and reinforce the validity of the results.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

When selecting picturebooks for this project, the most prominent criterion was that the literature was suitable for intercultural learning, with the ability to nurture tolerance and empathy (Evans, 2018), and to aid ethical and critical thinking (Stewart, 2015). Selecting literature in which the students could both recognize themselves, make connections to other texts, and to the world, was also important, to catch the students' interest and make the stories relevant to them (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Additionally, students' emotions can be developed when learning through their senses and thereby contribute to deeper learning, therefore, selecting picturebooks in which the illustrations, in combination with the text, could engage both the hermeneutic impulse, the personal impulse, and the aesthetic impulse was important (Driggs Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007).

To find such literature the idea was to look for picturebooks where the illustrations are as important for the story as the text, because, in picturebooks, the story is created in the interplay between pictures and text (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Furthermore, in the selected picturebooks text and pictures leave gaps for the readers to fill in, and, through active participation, provide opportunities for personal engagement in the story (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). The illustrations in the selected picturebooks provide information that is more difficult to give only by using words, and the text provides information that is more difficult to give through the illustrations. By using picturebooks where text and illustrations are interdependent, the teacher has opportunities to teach how to read picturebooks effectively and coherently, with a focus on how words and pictures work together to tell the story.

The illustrations in the selected picturebooks provide opportunities for teaching visual literacy, by showing examples of basic visual elements, such as the use of colours, perspectives, techniques, and composition (O'Neil, 2011), and examples of how illustrations can give information about characters, such as facial expressions, body postures, gestures, actions, and symbols (Giorgis et al., 1999).

The language in the selected picturebooks is on a level that 6th and 7th-grade students can easily understand, without using too much time and energy on language comprehension, but rather on the narrative told through text and pictures (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Furthermore, both text and illustrations are of high quality, well suited for an engaging read-aloud, and likely to create curiosity and wonder (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Opportunities for uncovering conflicts and different values, based on different motives, beliefs, and attitudes, are represented in both selected picturebooks, facilitating discussion, reflection, and change of perspectives, which eventually could lead to intercultural competence (Louie, 2006). Finally, the themes in the selected picturebooks serve aims and objectives in the curriculum concerning intercultural competence, such as human dignity and human rights (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

The rationale for using the picturebooks, *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), and *The Island* (Greder, 2007), is based on their suitability for teaching intercultural competence in the primary school ESL classroom. Both selected books fit the category of multicultural literature, as they tell the stories of underrepresented groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers (Iway, 2009), reflecting their life experiences (Mestre & Scott, 1997). Additionally, both *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) provide opportunities to enter into the literary characters' worlds, by seeing things from their perspectives (Louie, 2005), and both picturebooks offer characters with which the students can identify and situations they can recognize (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Also, through the stories about the stranger in *The Island* (Greder, 2007), and Joe and the Silence Seeker in *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), the students can learn something new about themselves and others (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Furthermore, both *The Silence Seeker* (Morley and Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) are well-known award-winning picturebooks of high quality (Bista, 2012).

The picturebook *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), selected for the teaching project intended for 6th grade, is about a young boy, Joe, who is living in a big city. One day Joe meets a new boy sitting on the doorstep outside his building. Joe's mother tells him that the new boy is an asylum seeker, but Joe misunderstands and thinks she says, *a silence seeker*. Joe decides to take the new boy around the city to look for silence, but everywhere they go there is only noise. The next day the new boy has disappeared, and Joe thinks he has left to look for silence elsewhere. The misunderstanding between Joe and his mother is never clarified.

The picturebook *The Island* (Greder, 2007), selected for the teaching project intended for 7th grade, is about a small island community. One day a stranger has been washed ashore on the beach and no one knows who he is or where he has come from, and even though he is naked and unarmed, the islanders consider him a threat. The islanders treat the stranger more like an animal than a human being and put him in a deserted goat pen with nothing to eat or drink. The islanders claim that the stranger will destroy their lives on the island and imagine that he is a dangerous killer. There is only one man, the fisherman, who wants to help the stranger, but the other islanders threaten to set his boat on fire if he does so. The story ends with the islanders pushing the stranger back into the sea and building a fortress around the island. They decide to never again eat the fish from the sea, because the fish come from the same sea that brought them the stranger, and they even shoot down passing seabirds so that no one can find their island again.

4. DIDACTIC FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the selected literature, the picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder 2007), will be analyzed concerning their suitability for intercultural learning, focusing on the ability to learn through own and others' experiences to nurture tolerance and empathy (Evans, 2018) and to learn how to think critically and act ethically (Stewart, 2015).

4.1. *The Silence Seeker*

The first picturebook selected for this project is *The Silence Seeker*, written by Ben Morley and illustrated by Carl Pearce (Morley & Pearce, 2009). The story is narrated in the first person, seen from the young boy Joe's perspective. Joe lives in London, and the story starts with an episode where Joe meets a new boy on the doorstep of his apartment house (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). The narrative develops through a misunderstanding at the beginning of the story, where Joe's mother tells him that the new boy is an asylum seeker, and Joe misinterprets and thinks she says, "a Silence Seeker" (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). The misunderstanding is reinforced when Joe's mother adds that the boy "has come from far away, looking for peace and quiet" (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). Joe decides to help his new neighbour to find "a silence" and takes him to different locations in the city, however, this proves to be more difficult than he had expected, and they find only noisy people and places,

such as shouting teenagers, grumbling homeless people, or noisy traffic (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). Furthermore, the humorous descriptions of people through the young narrator's voice, such as “mischief-makers” and “up-to-no-goods”, fits the colour-rich and expressive illustrations perfectly, creating an imaginative and trustworthy whole (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.).

Although Joe’s mission of helping the Silence Seeker to find a quiet place is not successful, there is hope visualized through the relationship growing between the two boys, clearly depicted in the illustrations where Joe shares his sandwich with the Silence Seeker, and where the two boys hold hands and the new boy is smiling, accompanied by the text line “The boy smiled again” (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). When Joe and the Silence Seeker return to the house, Joe is disappointed that they did not find “a Silence”, nevertheless, he is hopeful for the next day’s search and says that “we can keep looking tomorrow... If you like” (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). However, the following day, when Joe comes out on the doorstep, carrying sandwiches for both, there is no one there. Joe thinks that the Silence Seeker has “gone to look for a Silence somewhere else” and concludes that “Maybe it was too noisy for him here”, accompanied by an illustration showing a busy street with road workers and roadblocks (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). In one of the last pages, Joe is sitting in his bed at night, looking out of his bedroom window at a plane crossing over the noisy city, maybe wondering where his new friend has gone (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). This illustration has no text to accompany it and could be a good starting point for sharing thoughts about what happened to the new boy after he left.

The main topic of *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) is belonging (finding the place where you belong) and finding peace. If applying a literal understanding of finding peace, one could focus on all the noise that surrounds us and talk about the need for finding silence in our surroundings. However, for this picturebook, the concept of finding peace is most obviously also meant to be read metaphorically, i.e., to find peace in your life or your heart. Other salient topics are refugees, immigration, homelessness, friendship, and communication. The story is told from a child’s perspective, which could make difficult topics, such as immigration and refugees, more accessible for young learners, and even if the information about refugees seeking asylum is not provided directly in the text, the picturebook facilitates opportunities for discussion about such issues. Additionally, the fact that we know so little about the Silence Seeker also provides opportunities for independent thinking and amazement. Furthermore, in that respect, teachers could ask questions about what could have

happened to the Silence Seeker in the past, what is going to happen to him in the future, and what are his thoughts and feelings, and encourage the students to think critically and ethically about issues such as refugees and immigration.

Another matter that could be an interesting point of departure for discourse or other structured activities is Joe's misconception of why the Silence Seeker has come, and why he leaves so suddenly. A relevant question in this regard is how Joe could so easily miss the point that his new neighbour is an asylum seeker. Another interesting issue to discuss could be why the Silence Seeker is not speaking. Young students may have various explanations for the boy's silence, and their explanations might not correspond with the ones that are more obvious to adults, for example, that he speaks another language because he is a refugee from another country, or that he is traumatized from war and bad experiences. Another interesting detail, which might also challenge the readers' prejudices, is that the narrator, Joe, is coloured, and the asylum seeker is white. Some readers might be confused about who is the asylum seeker and who is the narrator, caused by the characters' apparent ethnicity, and this confusion could initiate interesting discussions about preconceived ideas based on appearance.

The digitally created illustrations in *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) are vivid, with bright colours, expressive characters, and plentiful details, depicting people and the city in a way in which the reader can easily imagine the atmosphere and sounds of the city and the feelings of the characters. The illustrations switch between detailed overview images, where much is happening at the same time, and close-ups, where the focus is on only a few features (Morley & Pearce, 2009). The book format is 27 x 22 cm (landscape format), giving opportunities for panorama pictures in the double spreads. In some of the panorama images, there is action on more than one level, e.g., where some "mischief-makers [are] shouting and pushing and kicking cans" under a flyover with "the hum-humming of cars overhead", and the two boys watching, placed down in the left corner with their backs to the readers, giving the readers a feeling of watching with the boys (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). One example of a close-up is on one of the opening pages where we can see the Silence Seeker's face, slightly facing the side with the eyes closed, and the narrator's voice saying, "I have never met a Silence Seeker before. Every morning he sits on the doorstep. Sometimes he closes his eyes. I think he is listening for a Silence" (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.).

There is no clear deviation between the text and the illustrations in this picturebook, however, the tone of the text lines is naive, coming from a child narrator's voice, whereas the pictures

hold more information than the text, by showing details the text does not convey. One example of the abundance of details in the illustrations is the picture of some teenagers in the laundry room, where the illustration is showing the teenagers' good mood and the close relationship between them, in addition to focusing on the noise that is made, both from the washing machines, the radio, and the teenagers themselves (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). Another example where the illustration indicates that there is something more going on than what is told by the narrator's voice is the close-up of the Silence Seeker's face (as mentioned above), where the text expresses what Joe imagines the newcomer is thinking about, but where the readers, for whom the misunderstanding is clarified, might think that the boy is thinking about something completely different (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). Thus, for the students to get the most out of this picturebook, they should practice visual literacy (how to read pictures) in line with text, and, additionally, the focus should be on gaps in the text by imagining what happens where the narrative breaks off. In this way, the students can more easily identify with the Silence Seeker, and see things from his, as well as from the narrator's, perspective, in addition to imagining what could have happened before and after the events directly told in the book.

4.2. *The Island*

The second picturebook selected for this project is *The Island* by Armin Greder (Greder, 2007). *The Island* (Greder, 2007) was first published in Germany in 2002 as *Die Insel*. The picturebook tells the story of a man who is washed ashore on a desert island, and although he is naked and unarmed, the islanders consider him a threat to their society. At first, they wish to send him straight back into the foaming sea, however, the fisherman, one of the islanders, convinces the others to let him stay, stating that if they send him back into the sea "it will be the death of him and I don't want to have that on my conscience" (Greder, 2007, n.p.). The other islanders agree to let him stay and put him in a deserted goat pen on the outskirts of the island. After some time, "the stranger" appears in town, trying to "make them understand that he was hungry, that he hadn't eaten for days, could they not give him something to eat" (Greder, 2007, n.p.), an event that provokes the islanders and makes them feel that "the stranger" interferes with their lives. The islanders further claim that "the stranger" is dangerous, that he scares the children and haunts them in their dreams, and that the only solution would be to send him back into the dark sea where he came from. The fisherman tries to prevent this from happening, arguing that "even though he is not one of us, he is still our

responsibility” (Greder, 2007, n.p.). Although “some people agreed with the fisherman” that they should help the man, most of the islanders are not convinced (Greder, 2007, n.p.). On the contrary, the fisherman’s defense provokes the other islanders to set the fisherman’s raft on fire. The story ends with the islanders building a fortress around the island, to protect themselves from intruders, proclaiming that they would never again “eat fish from this sea that had brought them the stranger” (Greder, 2007, n.p.). *The Island* (Greder, 2007) problematizes important issues such as xenophobia, intolerance, and prejudice, which could be good starting points for discussions about issues concerning intercultural competence.

The style of the illustrations in *The Island* (Greder, 2007) resembles the European expressionist tradition. An example where the expressionist style is particularly prominent is the drawing of a woman screaming with fear when “the man appeared in town” (Greder, 2007, n.p.), most clearly reminiscent of the Norwegian expressionist Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*. The illustrations in *The Island* (Greder, 2007) are in dark charcoal, with hints of the colours red and yellow, where the grey tones establish a pessimistic and sombre atmosphere and the hints of red and yellow symbolize a more aggressive tone. The indefinite contours and the use of charcoal give the drawings a sense of movement. However, in the series of panels where the islanders’ thoughts are visualized, the outlines are more definite and the drawings in the panels come across as more incomplete, resembling sketches (Greder, 2007, n.p.). The use of panels in this section stands out from the illustrations in the rest of the book and contributes to separating the imaginative thoughts of the islanders from reality.

In *The Island* (Greder, 2007), there are several examples of how words and pictures work together to create meaning. According to Nodelman (1990), when text and pictures are received simultaneously, we gather spatial and temporal information from both pictures and text to interpret the narrative. Furthermore, while several emotions could be captured in just one picture, text often needs many words to describe someone's feelings, exemplified by the notion that a picture “communicates what words could never convey, no matter how many of them one used” (Nodelman, 1990, p. 157).

On the other hand, words can help to focus the readers’ attention and point out which parts of the picture to focus on (Nodelman, 1990). One example of the interaction between words and pictures is the book cover, which depicts a dark fortress with high walls and watchtowers (Greder, 2007, cover picture). The fortress wraps itself all around the cover, indicating isolation and hostility. The book format is upright (218 x 314 mm) emphasizing the elevation of the walls which could symbolize a withdrawal from the surroundings. The book title, *The*

Island (Greder, 2007), contains nothing of this hostility or isolation, and without the illustration to accompany it, the title appears neutral. Thus, the cover picture adds something to the readers' interpretation of the title, and together, the cover picture and the title create a distinct meaning that none of them could have accomplished separately.

Another example of how text and pictures work together to create meaning is from the opening pages, a double-spread where the illustrations show a small raft, partly destroyed, and a naked, skinny, and bald man (Greder, 2007, n.p.). The man is unarmed, and his expression depicts wonder and astonishment. In this illustration, the man is placed down in the right corner of the page, and the only other illustration in this double-spread is his small raft, placed up in the left corner. The rest of the double-spread is all white and one of the few text lines says, "He wasn't like them" (Greder, 2007, n.p.). The readers could get the feeling that the islanders are observing the stranger from a distance, looking down at him, which gives the statement a more hostile effect, implying that the islanders consider him different from them. However, when the readers turn the page and look at the next double-spread, it is obvious that the stranger only differs from the islanders in the way that he is smaller, naked, and unarmed (Greder, 2007, n.p.). Thus, separately, the text line "He wasn't like them" suggests that the stranger is different than the islanders, but when looking at the pictures of both the newcomer and the islanders, through the eyes of the observer (i.e., the reader), it is quite clear that they are similar (Greder, 2007, n.p.). On the other hand, seen through the eyes of the islanders, the stranger seems different. Furthermore, by using an omniscient narrator voice, and by observing the events both from the outside and from the different characters' perspectives, the readers get the chance to look at the story from different angles. In this way, "we construct new connections and make modifications of our previous interpretations, in a Piagetian process of assimilation and accommodation" (Sipe, 1998, p.106). Hence, pointing out that things could appear differently when seen from different perspectives, and the notion that the perception of truth depends on who is seeing, could be used as points of departure for discussions in class.

In yet another example of the interaction between text and illustrations, the text simply says, "So they took him in" (Greder, 2007, n.p.). This text line could be describing a friendly action, however, accompanied by the illustrations of a group of big, angry men with rakes, pitchforks, and picks targeting a skinny, naked, and unarmed man, the readers are more likely to get the impression of hostility and agitation. Additionally, there are ropes tied around the stranger's waist and arms, and his back is turned to the islanders, showing that he is

defenseless (Greder, 2007, n.p.). Words and pictures in this double-spread depict the same event in different ways. Another example where text and illustrations deviate is the double-spread where the text says, “One morning the man appeared in town”, not indicating any danger, whereas the illustration shows a woman screaming with fear (Greder, 2007, n.p.). These examples could be used to show the necessity of identifying with others and seeing things from different perspectives to be able to understand other people and the world.

Lastly, in an example where we can see some boys chasing a smaller boy with sticks, similar to the illustration on the previous page where some men are chasing the stranger, the illustration adds to the story, since there is no text line accompanying it (Greder, 2007, n.p.). This illustration shows how children often copy their parents’ behaviour, and eventually how fear, hatred, and prejudice could be learned and inherited from generation to generation. Thus, working strategically with activities and discussion regarding this picture could serve the learning aims of acting more critically and ethically, and making independent choices.

5. DIDACTIC IMPLEMENTATION AND DISCUSSION

The teaching project includes two separate teaching plans, where Teaching Plan 1 consists of five 45 minutes lessons over three weeks, and Teaching Plan 2 consists of four 45 minutes lessons over two weeks. For both teaching plans, each student is paired up with a learning partner to discuss and cooperate throughout the lessons.

In the following, firstly, the intended target groups will be described, secondly, there will be a brief description of how the students will be assessed, and thirdly, a method that is going to be used in both teaching projects, called the read-aloud, will be explained. Finally, the tasks and activities for the projects, based on the picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), and *The Island* (Greder, 2007), will be described and discussed according to their suitability for developing intercultural competence in the ESL classroom.

5.1. The Target Groups

The intended target groups are groups of about 20 6th and 7th grade ESL students in Norway, where Teaching Plan 1, based on the picturebook *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), is suitable for 6th grade and Teaching Plan 2, based on the picturebook *The Island* (Greder, 2007), is suitable for 7th grade. However, teachers of different groups might find both

plans appropriate for both years 6 and 7. The groups might be multilingual, with students from different parts of the world, with different language backgrounds. Most likely, a majority of the students will have English as their L2, however, in some parts of Norway, the majority of the students have English as their L3, with Norwegian as their L2. The students might have divergent skills in English, however, if there are students not able to follow the teaching plans as outlined, there should be additional adapted plans for them. The English teachers who are implementing the teaching plans should know the groups well and the groups should be used to discussing different issues and themes, both by using learning partners, in small groups, and a full class. The target groups should also be trained in taking turns, listening to others, and respecting different views and opinions.

It would be an advantage if the students had experience with reading pictures, which more readily would enable them to construct meaning from both words and visuals (O'Neil, 2011). In visual literacy training in primary school, the focus could for example be on the use of warm colours, like red and orange, which might express agitation and excitement, and cold colours, like blue and green, which often express distance and calmness (Giorgis et al., 1999). Other features regarding visuals that could be worked with beforehand are how the illustrators use different perspectives, either to take a stance towards characters, to depict emotions, to create an attachment to the story, or to show alternating viewpoints (Giorgis et al., 1999). Teachers might also pre-teach how different techniques and media can affect readers' interpretations, and how composition can create a holistic expression, for example through the layout, the placement of text, the typeface, the book jacket, or borders (Giorgis et al., 1999). Additionally, in this preparatory work, the students could practice interpreting different characters' facial expressions, body postures, actions, symbols, size, position, and breaking of frames in illustrations, because the ability to interpret character traits is important for comprehension when the narratives, or parts of the narratives, are visualized in pictures (Prior et al., 2012). However, in both planned teaching projects practicing how to read pictures will be part of the activities, thus, implementing the projects without any prior knowledge of visual literacy will not be a problem.

The teaching should take place in a classroom equipped with a digital board and student equipment, like iPads, pencils, crayons, paper, and post-it notes. In addition, different tasks will be distributed throughout the projects.

5.2. Assessment

Oral assessment of the students' level of participation in discussions and the level of effort put into different tasks will be given during lessons. In each of the teaching plans, the last post-reading activity will be assessed to find out to what extent the students are able to see the world from different perspectives, identify with other people, and think critically about other people's situations. Written feedback will be given on the final writing tasks according to the given task criteria, as outlined at the end of each teaching plan. For both the teaching plans, firstly, the aim will be to describe one of the character's thoughts and feelings, and through these descriptions, the teachers can assess how well the students can identify with others and see things from other people's perspectives. Secondly, the students are asked to justify why the characters think and feel the way they do, and to show this in text and drawings, and based on these justifications, the students can show their ability to think critically about other people's situations.

5.3. The Read-aloud

According to Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009), a read-aloud is "an instructional practice where teachers [...] read texts aloud to children" (p. 111). In the read-aloud, the teachers use effects such as pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses, eye contact, questions, and comments to make the reading enjoyable and engaging for the students in the literacy process (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Ellis and Mourão (2021) claim that through providing both pictures and rich and authentic language, the read-aloud of picturebooks plays an important role in meaning-making. According to Ellis and Mourão (2021), the read-aloud is an interplay between the picturebook itself, as a constant, aesthetic object, the students, with their differences, such as expectations, knowledge, languages, and personalities, and the teacher's use of different expressive techniques. The interplay between the variables (the picturebook, the students, and the teacher) affects the construction of meaning and will vary as the variables change (Ellis & Mourão, 2021).

Furthermore, the picturebook read-aloud can be motivating for young learners because of the experience of achievement, both in listening and understanding the gist, at the same time as they are entertained (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Moreover, the teacher's mediation plays an important role regarding how the students experience the read-aloud, for example, if they

maintain interest and attention during the reading, and if they are positive after the read-aloud (Ellis & Mourão, 2021).

According to Norris (2020), a read-aloud should be divided into three parts: Pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. In the pre-reading phase, selecting culturally authentic picturebooks of high quality is crucial (Norris, 2020), and Ellis and Mourão (2021) add that the selected picturebooks should both be suitable for reading aloud, they should serve educational purposes, as well as having an aesthetic appeal. Additionally, the importance of including visual literacy training is evident (Averginou & Ericson, 1997). During the read-aloud, in the while-reading phase, through expanding on prior thoughts and ideas, the students should be encouraged to participate in discussions initiated and guided by the teachers, where the teachers ask open-ended questions and help to answer questions asked by the students (Norris, 2020). These discussions are by Ellis and Mourão (2021) called picturebook talks, including routines before and after the read-aloud, such as opening the read-aloud, for example by talking about the picturebook's paratext, such as book creators and layout. Furthermore, the teacher could be asking questions to activate background knowledge and to make predictions and reflections by clarifying words and phrases (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Additionally, the teacher could be recasting the story, using classroom language, commentating on what the visuals are telling us (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Finally, in the post-reading phase, there should be follow-up activities to extend learning, such as discussions, journaling, rereading, questioning, drawing, and oral responses (Norris, 2020).

In addition to increasing students' vocabulary and language comprehension, the read-aloud seems to strengthen the understanding of, and engagement with, the text being read aloud because the engagement that a read-aloud can create requires active thinking and reflection (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Moreover, during a read-aloud, students often make connections to their life experiences, "text-to-self", to previously read texts, "text-to-text", and to the world, "text-to-world", and by making these connections they engage more actively with the text (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009, p. 113). Britt et al. (2016) add that combined with "strategic questioning and enrichment activities" opportunities to include social-emotional learning into the ESL classroom are given (p. 53). Norris (2020) supports the idea that the read-aloud can increase students' ability to think critically by discussing and responding to the text.

In sum, "[i]nteractive read-alouds combined with strategic questioning and enrichment activities provide opportunities for teachers to incorporate social-emotional learning into the

regular school day” (Britt et al., 2016, p. 53), and if used in a purposeful and well-prepared manner in the process of pre-, while-, and post-reading activities, the read-aloud “offers a way to incorporate multicultural education and social justice to begin building cultural awareness” (Norris, 2020, p. 187) and could be used to promote intercultural learning by increasing students' ability to see the world from different perspectives, to identify with other people, and to think critically.

5.4. *The Silence Seeker*

The classroom activities for the picturebook *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) contain pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities. A schematic presentation of Teaching Plan 1 is attached (Appendix 1).

5.4.1. Pre-reading Activities

Pre-reading activities are important for creating curiosity and engagement before presenting stories through literature to children (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Additionally, to help the students to connect the story content to their own life, prior knowledge should be awakened, and key vocabulary and key concepts should be taught (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). The first pre-reading activity starts with the teacher asking the students to close their eyes and listen for sounds in the room for about one minute, before leading them further, into the thoughts of one of the characters in the picturebook, the Silence Seeker. The students should keep their eyes closed while the teacher says something along these lines:

Take a deep breath, focus on listening for sounds. Imagine that you are an asylum seeker in a new country, a new city, a new neighbourhood. You meet a young boy who takes you to different places in the city. You can't understand what he is saying, but you can tell by the look on his face that he is friendly. Though, all the new places and all the people you meet make you sad. After a while, you stop to rest under a big tree, and the boy gives you a sandwich. It's the best sandwich you ever tasted, and it makes you feel a bit better. That night you have to escape. Where do you go? What happens next? Are you alone or with someone else? Are you scared? How do you feel about escaping? What are you dreaming of? What are your hopes for the future?

According to Iser (1974), “Expectations [are] aroused in the reader by allusions to the things he knows or thinks he knows”, and this “initiates the act of imagination by which the reader makes the virtual actual” (p. 37). Thus, by guiding the students into the mind of the Silence Seeker, emotional connections between the reader and the text could be strengthened. Besides, Arizpe et al. (2014) anticipate the importance of an experience of “living through” when responding to multicultural literature (p. 311).

The second pre-reading activity will help the students to connect emotionally to the characters in the story, by discussing their experiences in the previous activity with their learning partners. If someone wants to share their thoughts with the whole class, this should be encouraged, because it could help more reluctant students to dare to speak up and share their thoughts with others, as “development of listening can form the basis of initial speaking practice” (Pinter, 2017, p. 72). Besides, students might recognize other students’ contemplation and feelings. To make the students think critically, the teacher should ask open-ended questions (Heggernes, 2019), such as:

Have you ever been new to a place where you didn’t know anyone? How did that make you feel? Have you ever experienced not understanding the language? How did you feel when this happened? Have you ever been insecure about what will happen next? How did that make you feel? Look at the picture on the book cover, and pay special attention to facial expressions and body language: What do you think the bigger boy is feeling? Why do you think so? What do you think the smaller boy is feeling? Why do you think so? What kind of relationship do you think the boys in the story have? What makes you think that?

In the third pre-reading activity, the class will work with one of the pictures from the picturebook, where Joe and the Silence Seeker are watching some older kids in the laundry room (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). This illustration is selected because of its many graphic elements, for the students to learn more about how to read pictures. The text will be removed from the picture so that the students can concentrate on studying and interpreting the illustration (Appendix 3). Firstly, the teacher asks the students to describe the graphical elements in the picture, such as the two boys, the young people, the washing machines, the radio, and the musical notes. Secondly, they will be asked to describe the placement of the elements, and thirdly, they should try to interpret what the picture is communicating. Lastly, the students should be encouraged to say something about how they value the picture esthetically (Averginou & Ericson, 1997). The teacher asks the students to pay special

attention to the visual elements, such as lines, directions, colours, forms, perspectives, techniques, and composition (Giorgis et al., 1999). In this picture, the placement of the main characters seems important, as they are spectators of the action taking place in the laundry room, and the use of signs, such as the musical notes over the young people's heads, initiating that they are listening to music and singing. There are also lines in front of a radio, initiating sound. Another thing to explore in this picture is the use of light and lines, and how the ray of yellow light falls on the students, leaving Joe and the Silence Seeker in the shadows. The students could also be asked to study the characters' faces and body postures, to figure out what they are thinking and feeling (Prior et al., 2012), and the characters' placement could say something about their relationship with each other (O'Neil, 2011).

The last pre-reading activity is pre-teaching some of the new vocabulary and key concepts, to help the students to understand the main content of the story. To awaken prior knowledge about asylum seekers, which is important to understand the main content of the picturebook *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), and connect to the characters in the story, the students can share their knowledge and the teacher can fill in where the students fall short (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). Moreover, to be able to connect emotionally to the characters in the story, the students should not have to use too much energy on language comprehension. In this project, where the students are reading aesthetically, the focus should be on connecting emotionally with the text, which is important when developing intercultural competence, including both personal, qualitative, kinaesthetic, and sensuous ways to experience literature and the world (Rosenblatt, 1982).

One way to teach new words and phrases could be to make a word-bank poster containing words and phrases from the picturebook connected to the story content. The teacher could either make the poster beforehand or together with the students in class, deciding together which words should be pre-thought and put on the poster (Appendix 4). By helping students to organize new words and phrases in their minds and linking them to previous knowledge, new vocabulary could more easily be recognized and understood when appearing in a text (Cook, 2016). After showing the poster and reading and repeating the words and phrases aloud, the students can make suggestions for how to use the new vocabulary in different contexts, as revisiting new vocabulary and using new words and phrases in different settings promotes vocabulary acquisition (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2016). This can be done orally in small groups (3-5 students), or the students can compose sentences with their learning partners (in pairs) and write them on post-it notes to put on the blackboard, for the teacher to read aloud.

The word-bank poster should be visible to the students throughout the project and reminded of when needed.

Finally, to pique curiosity and prepare the students for the next session, the teacher should show a copy of the picturebook, and display the cover picture on the digital board, as book covers create expectations (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

5.4.2. While-reading Activities

For the while-reading part of Teaching Plan 1, the teacher should try to create an atmosphere that prepares the students affectively and psychologically for the read-aloud (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). This could be done by dimming the lights and lighting a candle, or by playing relaxing music. While the teacher reads *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) to the class, the pages are shown on the digital board, enabling the students to see both text and pictures at the same time as they can see and hear the teacher reading and mediating the picturebook. The digital board will be lit up so that a dim classroom will serve to strengthen the focus on text and illustrations. When reading the picturebook, the teacher follows procedures for the read-aloud, as explained previously. Firstly, the teacher shows the book cover, asking questions about the cover picture and the title, and, simultaneously, the cover picture is visible on the digital board. The book cover creates expectations for the story and says something about important events, the genre, and the addressees (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Additionally, the connection between the cover picture and the title creates an important relationship (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

To aid visual literacy, which, in addition to being important for the interpretation of the narrative in picturebooks, also is important to make sense of the world (Averginou & Ericson, 1997), the teacher could ask the students about the graphical elements, the placement of the elements, the use of colours, the typeface and placement of the title, and what they think these elements could symbolize. Then, the teacher could focus on the boys in the cover picture, drawing attention to position, size, postures, and facial expressions, which give important information about the characters (Prior et al., 2012). Secondly, the teacher reads the text on the back of the book, before asking what the students think the book is about and encouraging them to share any expectations for the content. Rehearsing predicting skills in this way could both trigger curiosity about the story and teach the students “to make predictions in other situations as well” (Pinter, 2017, p. 120).

During the read-aloud, the teacher stops to talk about the pictures, to help the students to construct meaning from the visuals, thus, to understand the narrative in picturebooks, the ability to read pictures is as important as interpreting the words (O'Neil, 2011). To enable meaningful interaction between the students, and between the students and the teacher, to encourage student participation, and aid interpretation of the picturebook narrative, the picturebook talk is important, because the language provided by the teacher and the students is contextualized in a way that is accessible and understandable for young learners (Ellis & Mourão, 2021).

In some of the pictures, the teacher could focus on places and sounds, since this is what motivates Joe, the main character in *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009), in his search for silence, and on the relationship between the boys, since friendship is a salient topic in the picturebook and a topic that most students can easily relate to because it concerns them in their daily life (Morley & Pearce, 2009). The teacher's questions during the read-aloud should both lead to clarifications of the narrative and inspire wonder, amazement, and critical thinking, and, regardless of the purpose of the questions, all questions should be open-ended, encouraging independent thinking (Heggernes, 2019). Furthermore, the students should be encouraged to use both text and illustrations in combination to create meaning (O'Neil, 2011). For example, one could ask questions about the illustration where the boys are eating sandwiches under a big tree, or the illustration where the boys hold hands, which is the only picture in which the Silence Seeker is smiling (Appendix 6). The importance of talking and responding to literature during the reading would, according to Louie (2006), help students to express themselves and to discuss beliefs and attitudes.

At the end of the read-aloud, the class should go back to looking at the cover, to discuss if the narrative met their expectations, or if they were surprised, or perhaps disappointed. Hence, a good approach when reading and experiencing a picturebook is to start with the whole, then to look at the details, before going back to the whole with a deeper comprehension, called the hermeneutic circle (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).

After the reading, there should be a brief discussion about the content of the story, guided by the teacher, to make the students consider how they experienced the story, to make them think critically about the story, and wonder about what the story communicates. To engage everybody in the conversation, the students could start with discussing with their learning partners, before sharing their thoughts with the whole group. The teacher should encourage the students to search for answers based on literal clues (Rosenblatt, 1978), and to give

grounds for their thoughts, with support in both text and illustrations (O’Neil, 2011). The following questions might help the students to get started:

There is a misunderstanding in the book, referring to the title, has someone noticed that? Who do you think the boys are? What can the boys’ appearance, postures, and facial expressions tell us about them? What does Joe’s room tell us about him? What are the boys thinking of each other? In the double-spread where the boys meet the down-and-outs, there are some signs over their heads. What do you think this means? What do you think has happened to the Silence Seeker before he met Joe on the doorstep that morning? What do you think happened during the night? What could Joe’s body language in the picture where he is looking for the Silence Seeker after he left tell us about what he is feeling? If you take a closer look at the same double-spread, what impression do all the different images, panels, frames, and text boxes in the same illustration give you? What do you think happened to the Silence Seeker after he left? Considering the last double-spread, where Joe is sitting on his doorstep looking at his neighbourhood and the city, what do you believe Joe thinks happened to the Silence Seeker? How did you like the story? How did the story make you feel?

Each question should be followed up with a question about why the students think the way they do, to encourage them to give reasons for their suppositions with evidence in text and pictures, because, at the same time as underscoring that there are no wrong answers as such, to be able to justify their suppositions, every answer should derive from something in the story (Rosenblatt, 1978).

5.4.3. Post-reading Activities

The first post-reading activity is to write what Joe and the Silence Seeker are thinking in different settings. The teacher prepares copies of some of the illustrations in the picturebook where thinking bubbles are added (Appendix 7, example with text written by previous 6th-grade students). The teacher should choose illustrations that stimulate reflection, such as one of the opening pictures where the two boys are sitting on the doorstep (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.), the picture where the boys are watching the “down-and-outs” (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.), the picture where the boys are eating sandwiches under a big tree (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.), or the picture where Joe is sitting in his bed at night, watching the noisy city (Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.). The students choose one of the pictures and write in the

empty thinking bubbles that are added to the picture. Allowing students to choose a picture that inspires them could give them a feeling of participation and influence, thus increasing motivation towards the task. According to Pinter (2017), “[a]llowing children to make some choices and initiate ideas during class is motivating for them because this will lead to more active involvement and more enjoyable learning” (p. 123). Besides, listening to students’ meanings, indicating that student opinions are acknowledged by the teacher, is crucial because it could stimulate motivation and independent learning (Pinter, 2017). Additionally, creating activities that are purposeful and that “create a communicative need”, for example by allowing students to discuss with their learning partner which pictures to choose, can “fuel [students’] motivation” (Pinter, 2017, p. 71).

For this task, it could be wise to display an example before the students set off on their own, both to help them to understand what to do, to inspire them, and to help them stay motivated (Pinter, 2017). To prevent the students from simply copying the teacher’s example, without reflecting on their own, using an additional picture for this demonstration could be wise. However, reluctant, or low-achieving students could benefit from using the same picture as in the example and should be allowed to do that if the teacher finds it advantageous. Besides, according to Pinter (2017), “collaborating with a peer may take away some of the pressures of second language writing” (p. 92), hence, cooperation between learning partners with differing abilities could make the task seem more manageable for reluctant learners.

To allow the students to express themselves and visualize their beliefs and attitudes, by responding creatively to literature (Louie, 2006), the session will end with a readers’ theatre or role-play, where the learning partners briefly rehearse the text they have written and perform it in front of the class. If there are students in the group who refuse to perform, they can simply read the text lines. By actively engaging the students in creating meaning between words and pictures, the students’ reflections could be stimulated (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Additionally, through the students’ performances, the students can both share thoughts and ideas and develop new perspectives, which could stimulate compassion and empathy, because being curious and open may foster positive attitudes to others (Pinter, 2017).

The second post-reading activity is an individual writing task, in which the students write the diary of the Silence Seeker. The main goal of this task is to create possibilities to connect emotionally to the Silence Seeker, by seeing things from his perspective and understanding more about what it would feel like to be an asylum seeker in a foreign country with an uncertain future. By responding to a multicultural picturebook in a creative process, such as

writing a diary, the students might experience a “living through”, not only a “knowledge about”, the themes and topics they have been working with (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 311).

Furthermore, to facilitate intercultural learning, the students should be engaged on a personal and emotional level (Byram, 1997), and since diaries, at least traditionally, have been used to write down one’s inner secrets (McNeill, 2003), writing a diary might encourage sharing feelings and attitudes. Besides, the fact that diaries are well known in children’s and young adults’ literature, for example from the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Kinney, 2007) and *The Dork Diaries* (Russel, 2009), could help the students to structure their texts by dividing them into natural paragraphs, where one day equals one paragraph. The students could also be encouraged to add drawings to their diary, as in the mentioned *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2007) and *The Dork Diaries* (Russel, 2009). Since the students’ texts are planned to be written digitally, the students’ drawings could be added afterward, and the teacher should remind the students to leave space for the drawings in the diary. To help the students who are struggling with writing English, and producing a whole text by themselves, a graphic organizer with sentence starters and suggestions for content will support the students in their writing (Appendix 8). According to Pinter (2006), “Scaffolding is essentially an instructional strategy which ensures that the child can gain confidence and take control of the task” (p. 12). However, the focus will be on how well the students can describe the feelings of The Silence Seeker through text and illustrations, by putting themselves in his situation, rather than on how well the text is composed regarding spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, and text structure.

In addition to the graphic organizer, the students will have copies of some of the pictures of the Silence Seeker (Appendix 9), where his emotions are depicted through visuals, such as facial expressions and body postures (Prior et al., 2012). Using a more image-based approach could, according to Arizpe et al. (2014), aid intercultural learning.

Since this is an individual task, and the students have different writing skills, the need for modification will be significant (Pinter, 2017), hence, the teacher should provide extra help to those who need it, allowing them to “progress at their own pace” (p. 19). At the same time, the teacher should encourage high-ability students to exceed the limits of the graphic organizer if they find such limits inhibitory (Pinter, 2017).

The diary will be written digitally, on student iPads with keyboards, where the students can use a proofreading program, to help them find suitable vocabulary and to use correct orthography.

The individual writing task will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Write a diary following the instructions in the writing frame where you describe the Silence Seeker's thoughts and feelings, based on both text and pictures
- Based on what you know about asylum seekers, you should express the Silence Seekers' situation through text and drawings

In the last lesson of this project, the students will have the opportunity to share their texts and illustrations with their peers. The students will read their texts in groups of four, and those who want to share their texts with the whole group can do that. The teacher should print out the student texts beforehand so that the students can add their illustrations to their texts. After the reading, there will be a round-off, where everyone gets the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences regarding the project with their peers. The teacher asks questions about what they have learned, how they have experienced the project, and which parts they enjoyed the most. As LK20 encourages, such a reminder and repetition of what the class has been working with will aid deeper learning, and hopefully, the whole project would “promote curiosity and engagement to prevent prejudices”, in addition to making their work seem relevant (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

5.5. *The Island*

The classroom activities for the picturebook *The Island* (Greder, 2007) contain pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities. A schematic presentation of Teaching Plan 2 is attached (Appendix 2).

5.5.1. Pre-reading Activities

In the first pre-reading activity, the teacher shows a picture from the *Council of Europe* about National Human Rights Institutions on the digital board, depicting hands in different colours stretching up, each hand carrying one human right (Council of Europe, 2001), (Appendix 10). The teacher asks the students what the illustration and text communicate, and if they have heard about human rights before. The students can discuss the meaning of the illustration and

text with their learning partners. Then, the teacher asks the students to think about what it means to be born free and equal and if they believe this is true for everybody in the world. Again, the students discuss with their learning partners, since by working collaboratively the students can share experiences and learn from each other (Pinter, 2017). Besides, listening to students' thoughts and opinions signalizes that their voices are important (Pinter, 2017). Furthermore, LK20 underscores the importance of learning how to think critically and act ethically when working with issues such as human dignity and human rights (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

In the second pre-reading activity, to practice how to read picturebooks, the students experience the relationship between text and pictures, and how text and pictures sometimes tell the same story, sometimes they tell the same story but from different perspectives, sometimes they tell different stories, sometimes the text is elaborating what is depicted in the illustrations, and sometimes the illustrations are elaborating what is told in the text lines. The activity will remind the students of the importance of reading the visuals, as well as the text (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). The students will be given opportunities to experience the text-picture relationship also later in the project. In this activity, half of the students are given a copy of an illustration from the picturebook where the text has been removed, and the other half are given the text from the same page, without the illustration. The students will then be asked to add suggestions for the missing text and illustrations accordingly. Beforehand, the teacher should choose a page with a short text and an expressive illustration, to make it easier for the students to come up with ideas. It could also be wise to let the students work in pairs so that they can help each other and share ideas. In this task, it is important to emphasize that there is no correct answer as such, but rather that they can use their imagination and the associations that the text and the illustration give them. Finally, the students can show their suggestions, and compare their solutions, before comparing them with the original page in the picturebook. Two pages that seem well suited for this purpose are the pages where the stranger is standing alone down in the right corner of the page, accompanied by the text, "He wasn't like them" (Greder, 2009, n.p), (Appendix 11), and the page where the islanders are following the stranger with sticks, rakes, and pitchforks aimed at his back, accompanied by the text, "So they took him in" (Greder, 2009, n.p.), (Appendix 12). Working with text and illustrations in this way exemplifies how text and illustrations are complementing each other, showing that text and pictures are interdependent (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). In this regard, the teacher could also exemplify how the visuals can communicate features and aspects in

only one picture, that would need many words to describe, and that words can communicate features and aspects that are more difficult to show in pictures, such as time and reflections (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). This activity could also be done after reading the picturebook, however, by doing it beforehand, when the students do not know which text belongs to which picture and vice versa, an element of surprise will be added to the task.

The last pre-reading activity is to show the picturebook *The Island* (Greder, 2007) and display the cover picture on the digital board, explaining and translating vocabulary important for text comprehension. For pre-teaching new vocabulary, the teacher could make a word-bank poster to hang on the classroom wall (Appendix 13), since revisiting words and phrases, and visualizing them throughout the activities, could make new vocabulary more accessible, both orally and in writing (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2016). Furthermore, to aid vocabulary acquisition, the teacher should help the students to connect new words and phrases to existing knowledge and to organize the new vocabulary into categories, such as word classes (Cook, 2016). Moreover, when teachers are aiding vocabulary acquisition, the students can focus more on the visuals and story content rather than text comprehension, and, hopefully, this would result in greater engagement and more personal involvement in the story.

5.5.2. While-reading Activities

The structure of the read-aloud will be somewhat like the read-aloud described for Teaching Plan 1 (Appendix 1), however, since this is a different picturebook, telling a different story, issues that will be focused on and explained during the reading, and questions asked during and after the reading, will vary.

Before reading the book, the teacher draws attention to the cover picture and the title (displayed on the digital board) asking the following questions:

What do you think the title could mean if it stood alone? Why do you think so? What would you think the book was about if you only saw the cover picture, without the title? Why do you think so? What do you think the title in combination with the picture of the fortress means? Why do you think so? What effect does the format, with the fortress in an upright position, give? What do you think the use of black and white in the cover illustration communicates? What do you think the red title alludes to?

A book cover can create many expectations about the story that is going to be told (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), and the students can draw on both intertextual and personal connections when interpreting the book cover (Sipe, 1999). Furthermore, the students can make connections to the world or be influenced by their relationship to the teacher, their class, or other contextual influences (Sipe, 1999). All this information, mainly based on the book cover, could be used to develop the students' predicting skills, which in turn will develop their analytical skills (Pinter, 2017).

During the read-aloud, it might be a good idea to stop at the point where the narrator's voice and perspective change from the stranger's point of view to the islanders' point of view, and where the stranger gradually appears more frightening in the illustrations (Greder, 2007, n.p.), and point out this change of perspectives to the students. However, if the students are very concentrated and 'inside' the story, it might not be a good idea to break up the delivery too much, but rather read the whole story first, and return to some of the passages in the picturebook and talk about important issues afterward, thus, maintaining interest and attention throughout the read-aloud (Ellis & Mourão, 2021).

After the read-aloud, there will be a discussion about how the students experienced the story, which will be important regarding how the story is interpreted (Iser, 2000). The teacher could ask about how the students experienced text and illustrations, such as what was more prominent in the text and what was more prominent in the illustrations, what would the story be like without the text or the illustrations, and how did text and illustrations influence each other (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). An interesting area to explore in *The Island* (Greder, 2007) is how the characters are depicted, both regarding size, colours, facial expressions, body postures, positions, actions, and symbols (Prior et al., 2012). Furthermore, the teacher can make the students aware of the progressive change in how the stranger is represented in the islanders' minds and make them contemplate what this could mean (Greder, 2007, n.p.).

Some students might also have associations to their own life (text-to-life) or to previous books or stories they have heard or read (text-to-text), or the story could have evoked associations to world events, for example from media (text-to-life) (Morrison & Włodarczyk, 2009). All these associations can influence the students' interpretations of the picturebook, hence, the focus should be on how the students perceive the story (Sipe 1999). When the students' personal experiences of the story are established, the teacher should encourage the students to find reasons for their perceptions and beliefs in both text and illustrations, and make them consider what the story is about, what the story wants to convey, and how the story is told. As

previously mentioned, even though, principally, there are no wrong answers, the students should be encouraged to give reasons for their perceptions and opinions based on the text, the pictures, or through a combination of these (Rosenblatt, 1978).

5.5.3. Post-reading Activities

In the first post-reading activity, the students are going to pretend to be one of the characters living on the island, writing a reader post to the island's local newspaper, sharing and arguing for the chosen character's opinion of the stranger. For this task, copies of some of the illustrations from the picturebook showing how the islanders are envisioning the stranger will be provided (Appendix 14). Furthermore, the students will be encouraged to base their interpretations of the character's opinions on both words and pictures, reminding them that words and pictures have the opportunity to communicate in different ways, where words are diegetic, communicating by telling and pictures are mimetic, communicating by showing (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). The picturebook will be available to the students throughout the project, for the students to reread and look at the illustrations, giving them time to make personal choices, to think, and reflect (Ellis & Mourão, 2021). If the students choose to use one of the provided pictures as a starting point, they can cut out the picture and paste it next to their text, or they can draw a picture to accompany their text. The students write by hand in a ready-made form (Appendix 15), to be displayed on the classroom wall, after having read and showed it to their learning partners. Writing for an audience in this way might help students to see "clear reasons for writing", and motivate them for the task (Pinter, 2017, p. 89).

Writing the reader posts can help the students to decentre, and by identifying with the characters in the story and putting themselves in the characters' positions, the students might understand the characters' thoughts and actions and see things from their perspectives (Byram, 1997). However, the teacher must stress that even if the characters' reactions and actions are understandable, it does not necessarily mean that they are fair and legitimate, based on human dignity and human rights (Barrett et al., 2014).

The second post-reading activity is to write the story from the stranger's perspective in a text containing only 50 words written on student iPads in a word document with word count. The purpose of the strict word limit is to encourage the students to use only the most expressive words and phrases and leave gaps for the readers to figure out some of the meaning (Iser, 1974). Because of the word limit, the students will be allowed to use incomplete sentences

and structure their text more like a poem. Writing short texts where the rules are few and simple “can motivate children to write more” (Pinter, 2017, p. 92), and, hopefully, it could also motivate reluctant writers.

The focus of this assignment is to communicate the stranger’s thoughts and feelings with a “living through” perspective (Arizpe et al., 2014, p. 311). Furthermore, the student products will show the students’ ability to decentre, based on how well they can see things from another person’s perspective (Byram, 1997). Copies of some of the illustrations from the picturebook, depicting the stranger in different situations, some of the islanders, the stranger’s raft, and the fisherman’s boat on fire, will be available for the students to study more closely during the writing (Appendix 16). The students can choose one or two of the provided pictures to accompany their texts, or they can make their own illustration(s). The illustrations from the picturebook (Appendix 16) will be provided digitally for the students to copy and paste into their texts. In both post-reading tasks, the students will have the possibility to recognize a person’s “universal feelings”, such as anger, fear, sadness, love, joy, and shame, which might promote intercultural learning (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6).

The lesson will end with a reading of the students’ texts, and showing the accompanying illustrations in groups of four, giving everyone a chance to share their products, because listening to others’ texts and considering their choice of illustrations (or own illustrations) could stimulate new thoughts and ideas. To promote the students’ critical thinking and reflections, the students should also discuss their responses, beliefs, and attitudes concerning central issues in the picturebook, such as fear and prejudice, because shared ideas could identify conflicts and uncover different values (Louie, 2006).

The 50-word story will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Write the stranger’s story using only 50 words, and one or two illustrations, either from the selection provided by the teacher, or own illustrations
- Use words, phrases, and illustrations that communicate the stranger’s thoughts and feelings well

In the aftermath, the teacher prints out the 50-word stories with illustrations, to hang on the classroom wall, next to the reader posts, completing the project and contributing to giving the task a stronger sense of purpose. By displaying the students’ work, the teacher shows appreciation for the “creative power of the pupils”, and points out that the creative learning process is also “a necessary part of the pupils’ development as human beings and in the

development of their identity” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Lastly, the teacher gives a written comment to each student, considering how well the student has managed to communicate the stranger’s thoughts and feelings through the choice of words and illustrations.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The world in which children grow up is increasingly diverse, with growing levels of conflicts, due to e.g., ethnic, religious, social, and cultural differences, and the ability to understand why people think and behave differently is highly important to navigate safely through life. Hence, implementing intercultural issues in the training of young students is crucial.

This thesis has researched the potential of using the high-quality multicultural picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) to develop students’ ability to see the world from different perspectives, the ability to identify with other people, and the ability to think critically. I have shown that multicultural picturebooks in general, and the two books discussed here in particular, provide excellent material for promoting intercultural competence in the ESL primary school classroom.

In the theoretical framework of this thesis, firstly, intercultural competence was defined, focussing on the combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness, before concepts of culture were outlined. Secondly, reader-response theory was explored, with a focus on the relationship between the text, the reader, the author, and the context. Thirdly, the concepts of multicultural literature, picturebooks, and visual literacy were explained and their suitability for developing intercultural competence was clarified. Lastly, previous research on the development of intercultural competence through multicultural picturebooks was presented.

In the chapter outlining methods and materials, reasons for selecting the picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) were given, and a brief overview of important themes and topics in the selected picturebooks was presented. In the following chapter, presenting the didactic framework, the selected picturebooks’ suitability for teaching intercultural competence was analyzed.

To exemplify how to develop intercultural competence through multicultural picturebooks, two teaching projects for 6th and 7th grade were developed, based on *The Silence Seeker*

(Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) accordingly, and considering their suitability for developing intercultural competence. My investigation shows that the selected literature, in combination with the suggested classroom activities, and based on reader-response theory and visual literacy, creates ample opportunities for uncovering conflicts and different values, facilitating discussion, reflection, and change of perspectives, which eventually will lead to intercultural competence. Also, this study shows that students' ability to decentre will be stimulated when exploring the selected literature, firstly, through identification with the characters in the stories, and secondly, by providing opportunities for putting oneself in the characters' positions and seeing things from their perspectives. The study also shows that through exploring *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) the students can recognize universal feelings, such as anger, fear, sadness, love, joy, and shame, through the characters in the stories. As the visuals in picturebooks tell stories by showing, moods and emotions in the narratives are reinforced, contributing to the recognition of universal feelings and thus promoting intercultural competence. Furthermore, when the students respond to the selected picturebooks in creative processes the purpose of developing intercultural competence will be achieved, and, when reading aesthetically, the likelihood of connecting emotionally with the text is greater. Moreover, this research shows that the experiences of the selected picturebooks provide opportunities for recognizing oneself, and seeing others, thus, providing a *living through-*, rather than *learning about-* perspective. Additionally, the combination of pictures and text in the selected picturebooks creates gaps, in which the students can fill in their interpretations and thereby get more actively engaged in the story-making.

To conclude, in this thesis I have shown that the multicultural picturebooks *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007) are excellent material for promoting intercultural competence in the ESL primary school classroom. Thus, my findings are consistent with other research in the field of intercultural competence and picturebooks. However, so far, only small-scale studies in the field have been conducted, and the need for further investigation is evident. In that respect, putting the teaching projects outlined in this thesis into practice, and analyzing the results, would be interesting.

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Appendix 1: Teaching Plan 1: *The Silence Seeker*

LESSON ONE: AROUSE INTEREST AND PREPARE THEMES AND VOCABULARY			
TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
5 minutes	Mindfulness activity	The students close their eyes and listen for sounds in the classroom before the teacher leads their thoughts into some of the actions in the book, asking questions considering themes and topics that the book alludes to.	To make the students connect with the Silence Seeker and help them understand how it would be to be in a new place, not understanding the language, and not knowing what will happen and where to go next.
10 minutes	Discussion	The teacher asks questions about experiences related to being new, not speaking the language, or being insecure about what will happen next, and the students discuss with their learning partners. Some students might also want to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.	To make the students connect emotionally to themes and topics in the picturebook and to help them to relate to, and identify with, the characters in the story.
15 minutes	Exploring visual literacy	The teacher displays one of the pictures from the picturebook on the digital board (Appendix 3) and talks about how to read the picture. The teacher asks the students to describe the graphical elements, the placement of the elements, what the picture is communicating, and how they value the picture	To be able to fully understand the content of a picturebook the students need to learn how to read pictures.

		aesthetically. Then the teacher asks the students to point to visual elements, such as lines, directions, colours, forms, perspectives, techniques, and composition.	
10 minutes	Pre-teaching new vocabulary	In advance, the teacher has made a word-bank poster (Appendix 4). The teacher reads the words, and the students repeat, and discuss, what each word means in different contexts and how it could be used according to word class. The poster is hung on the classroom wall to be visible throughout the project.	By aiding language comprehension, the students do not have to use so much energy on language comprehension and can more readily concentrate on understanding the main content of the story and what the story can teach us and connect to the story emotionally.
5 minutes	Displaying the picturebook	The teacher shows the picturebook and prepares the students for the story.	Being prepared can reduce uncertainty, increase motivation, and pique curiosity.

LESSON TWO: THE READ-ALoud

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
10 minutes	Predicting and guessing what the book is about	The students sit in a circle and the teacher shows the book cover and the title and asks what the cover and the title could tell us. Then they look briefly at the pictures in the book, the layout, the colours and try to predict what the book is about. The teacher emphasizes that there are no correct answers, however, the students should be encouraged to	To focus the students' attention, to engage them, and prepare them for the story that is going to be told, which could ease the process of comprehension, and make the students relate to the themes and characters more easily.

		give reasons for their predictions.	
20 minutes	The read-aloud	The teacher uses the read-aloud method, with gestures and facial expressions, stopping to take a closer look at the illustrations, to predict what comes next, and asking questions for comprehension and reflection. The pages in the picturebook are visible on the digital board during the reading.	To aid comprehension of words and visuals by telling the story in an engaging, and comprehensible way.
15 minutes	Discussion	The teacher asks questions about the themes and topics in the story and how the students experienced the story, encouraging them to give reasons for their answers. First, the students discuss with their learning partners, before sharing their thoughts with the rest of the class.	To make the students wonder, and think critically, about what the story communicates and how they experienced the story, in addition to uncovering possible misunderstandings.

LESSON THREE: PLAYING WITH PICTURES AND TEXT

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
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25 minutes	Exploring text and pictures	The teacher has made copies of three of the pictures from the picturebook where thinking bubbles are added and placed over each character's head (Appendix 5). The students choose one of the pictures and discuss what the characters could be thinking, before writing the characters' thoughts in the thinking bubbles.	To help the students to identify with the characters by urging them to see things from the characters' point of view, and using the characters' gestures, body postures, facial expressions, position, etc., to interpret their emotions. When cooperating in pairs, the students must discuss and give reasons for their choices.
20 minutes	Reading, or acting, the characters' thoughts	The students pretend to be the characters from the book, saying their thoughts out loud in front of the class.	To visualize and bring to life the characters' thoughts and feelings, which could facilitate students' compassion and empathy.

LESSON FOUR: WRITING THE SILENCE SEEKERS' DIARY

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
10 minutes	Introducing the students to the task criteria, the text structure, and the diary genre	The students discuss their experiences with diaries and the different purposes for writing a diary with their learning partners, before sharing some of their experiences and ideas with the class. The teacher hands out a graphic organizer for the diary (appendix 8) with the criteria for the task printed on the back, and pictures of the Silence Seeker (Appendix 9). The teacher displays the graphic organizer and the criteria on the digital board when explaining and clarifying.	To connect the students emotionally and intellectually to the text they are going to write and to aid for structure and increased writing skills, and thus facilitate more time for, and focus on, text content.

35 minutes	Writing and illustrating the Silence Seeker's diary	The students write individual texts on their iPads, using the graphic organizer, and relating to the task criteria. The students are encouraged to illustrate their texts and the illustrations will be added to the text when the texts have been printed out. The students can use dictionaries and proofreading programs, and the learning partners will be encouraged to help each other with language issues and text structure.	By responding to a multicultural text in a creative process, such as writing a diary and drawing, the students will likely experience <i>living through</i> , not only <i>knowledge about</i> , themes and topics.
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LESSON FIVE: READING AND SHOWING THE DIARIES IN CLASS

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
35 minutes	Reading the texts and showing the illustrations in groups and class	In groups of four, the students read their versions of the diary, showing their illustrations, and listen carefully to their peers' versions. Students who want can read and show their texts to the whole class. Beforehand, the teacher has printed out the student texts, and the students have added their illustrations.	When students get the opportunity to share their product, not only with the teacher but also with their peers, they can experience relevance. Besides, listening to what others have produced could inspire new ideas, and motivate further reading and writing.
10 minutes	Sharing experiences with the project	The students share their thoughts and experiences with the project in a class discussion. The teacher asks questions about what they have learned, how they experienced the project, and	To remind the students of what they have experienced and to repeat central issues from the project, to achieve deeper learning.

		which parts they enjoyed the most.	
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Appendix 2: Teaching Plan 2: *The Island*

LESSON ONE: CONNECTING TO THE THEME AND TEACHING VISUAL LITERACY			
TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
10 minutes	Discussion about human rights	The teacher displays a picture from the <i>Council of Europe</i> about National Human Rights Institutions, showing hands in different colours stretching up, marked with different human rights (Appendix 10). The teacher asks what the students think this means, and if they have heard about human rights before, and asks them to think about what it means to be born free and if they believe this is true for everybody. The students discuss with their learning partner before answering in a full class.	To set focus on human rights and make the students aware that the rules are having the purpose of protecting every human being throughout the world. Having human rights in mind will be important during this project.
20 minutes	Teaching visual literacy and the connection between text and pictures in picturebooks	The teacher hands out pictures and text from the picturebook where the text and illustrations are separated (Appendices 11 and 12), giving half of the students only the text, and the other half only the illustration, and asking them to add suggestions for the missing text and illustrations accordingly. Then the students show their suggestions, and compare their solutions, before comparing them with the original page in the	To teach the students how to read visuals, and how text and illustrations work together to create meaning in picturebooks.

		picturebook. The students will be working in pairs.	
15 minutes	Showing the picturebook <i>The Island</i> and pre-teaching vocabulary	The teacher shows the picturebook and talks about words and phrases important for language comprehension (Appendix 13) and prepares the students for the upcoming read-aloud and tasks.	By aiding language comprehension, the students do not have to use so much energy on interpreting words and phrases and can more readily concentrate on understanding the main content of the story and what the story can teach us. Besides, being prepared could reduce uncertainty and increase motivation, and showing the book could pique curiosity.

LESSON TWO: THE READ-ALoud			
TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
10 minutes	Predicting and guessing what the book is about	The teacher shows a copy of the picturebook and the book cover is displayed on the digital board. The teacher and the students discuss the title of the book, the pictures, the layout, the colours, and other visual elements, and try to guess or predict what the book is about. Firstly, the students discuss in pairs, before sharing their thoughts with the whole group.	To focus the students' attention on what is going to happen next, to engage the students and prepare them for the story that is going to be told, to ease the process of comprehension, and to help the students to relate to themes and characters in the story.
20 minutes	The read-aloud	The teacher uses the read-aloud method, with gestures and facial expressions, stopping to predict what comes next and asking	An engaging, and comprehensible, delivery of the story is important for the students to understand the content of the

		questions for comprehension and reflection.	story, to relate to themes and characters in the story, and to have a good experience of the picturebook.
15 minutes	Discussion	The teacher asks questions about themes and topics in the story, and how the pictures and text work together to create meaning and encourages the students to give reasons for their answers. The students discuss with their learning partners, before sharing their thoughts with the rest of the class.	To make the students wonder, and think critically, about what the story communicates, in addition to uncovering divergent interpretations and possible misunderstandings, and on how pictures and text create the story together. However, the focus should be on how the students perceive the story through text and illustrations.

LESSON THREE: WRITING READER POSTS

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
5 minutes	Introducing the task	The teacher introduces the task, listing the guidelines, the criteria, and the purpose of the task.	To clarify what the students are going to do, how they are going to do it, and why.
30 minutes	Writing the reader posts	The students write the reader posts individually by hand on sheets in A5 format (Appendix 15) to be hung on the classroom wall. The teacher displays copies of some of the pictures in the book (Appendix 16) to look at while writing. The picturebook is also available in the classroom.	To identify with one of the characters in the book and give reasons for whether the foreigner should stay or go.

10 minutes	Reading the posts and displaying them on the classroom wall	The students read their texts to their learning partners, and those who want to read to the whole class can do that. Then, the posts are displayed on the classroom wall for everybody to see and read.	To share thoughts and ideas, to recognize different views, and understand reasons for people's ideas, choices, and actions. Displaying the posts on the classroom wall might inspire the students to make an effort when writing.
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LESSON FOUR: WRITING A 50 WORD STORY

TIME	WHAT	HOW	WHY
5 minutes	Introducing and explaining the task	The teacher writes the text criteria and the instructions on the blackboard and explains the task.	Clear and visible instructions and criteria will help the students to understand what they are going to do.
30 minutes	Writing a 50-word story	The students write a text containing exactly 50 words, adding, or drawing, an illustration, telling the story from the stranger's perspective. The students write on their iPads in a word document with word count. The teacher prints out the texts after the lesson, the students add the illustration, and the teacher hangs the complete texts on the classroom wall.	Limiting the task to only 50 words forces the students to weigh their words and use only words that seem important and meaningful. This technique could also help reluctant writers to produce text. The choice of illustration from the picturebook, or own illustration, will complement the text and underscore the meaning.
10 minutes	Reading the texts in groups and discussing the meanings	The students read their texts in groups of four and listen carefully to the others' texts. The group members discuss what they think each text and illustration communicates.	When students get the opportunity to share their products, not only with the teacher but also with their peers, they can experience relevance. Besides, listening to what others have produced could

			inspire new ideas and motivate further reading and writing.
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Appendix 3: Picture from *The Silence Seeker*



(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

Appendix 4: Word Bank: *The Silence Seeker*

NOUNS	VERBS	ADJECTIVES / ADVERBS	PREPOSITION PHRASES
noise = bråk	to listen = å lytte he listened to = han lyttet til	noisy = bråkete noisily = på en bråkete måte	on the doorstep = på trappa utenfor huset
silence = stillhet	to hear = å høre he heard = han hørte	quiet = stille quietly = på en stille måte	down in the tunnel = nede i tunnelen
seeker = søker	to laugh = å le he laughed = han lo	silent = stille silently = på en stille måte	under the flyover = under gangbroa
asylum = asyl	to ask = å spørre he asked = han spurte	fun/funny = moro/morsom funnily = på en morsom måte	in the laundry room = i vaskerommet (vaskeriet)
sound = lyd	to wonder = å undre seg he wondered = han undret seg	kind = snill kindly = på en snill måte	in the city = i byen

Appendix 5: Pictures from *The Silence Seeker*

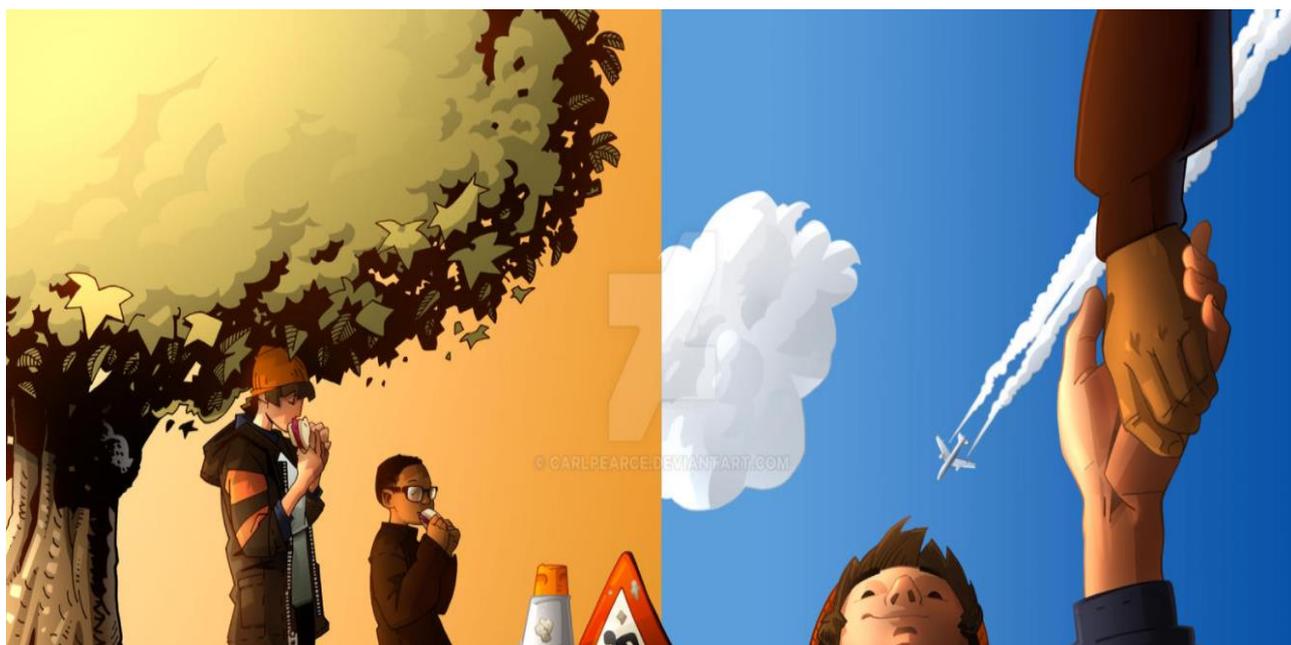


(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

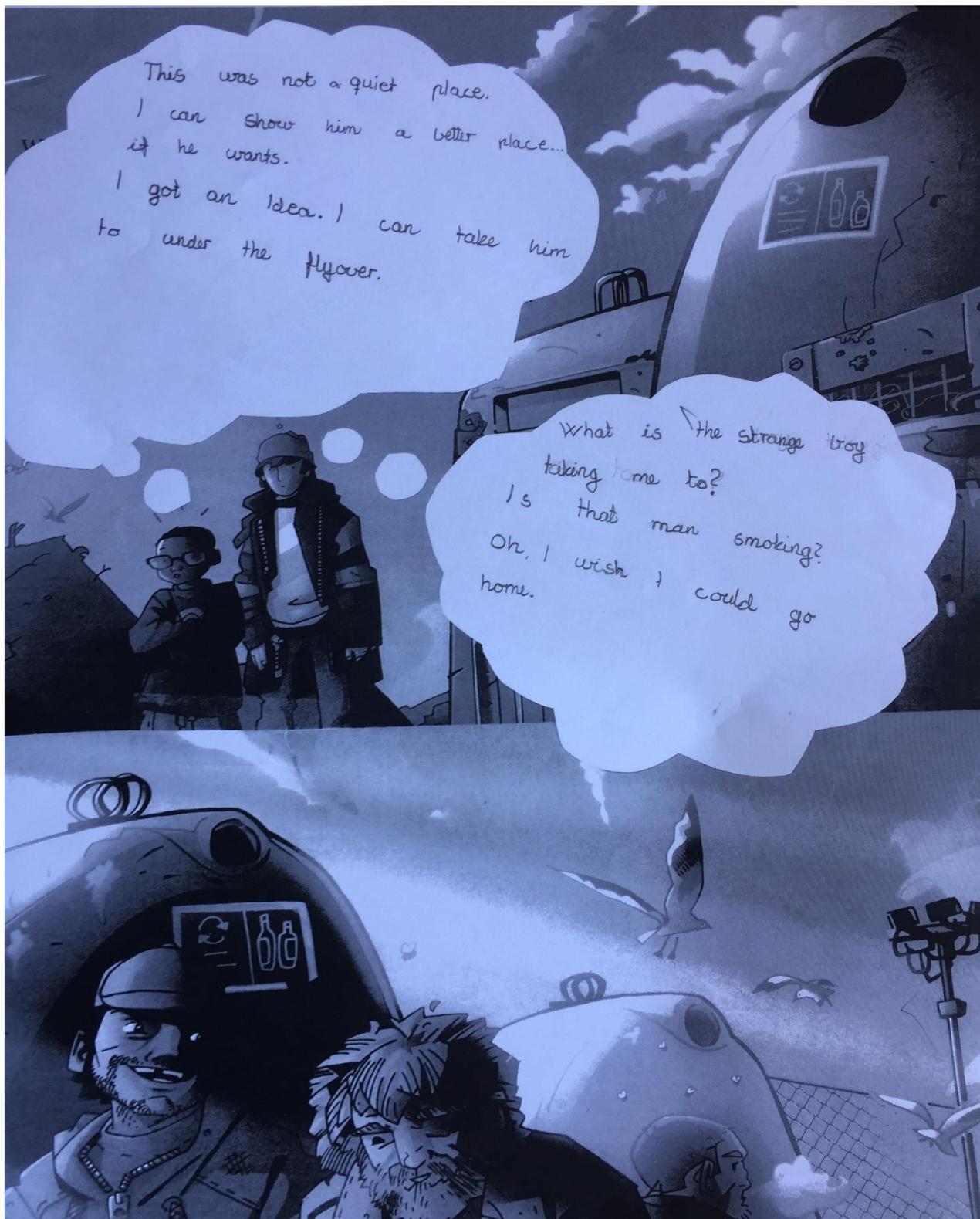


(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

Appendix 6: Pictures from *The Silence Seeker*



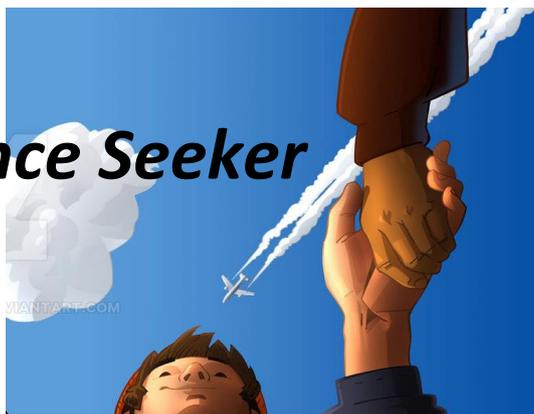
(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

Appendix 7: Picture from *The Silence Seeker* with speech bubbles

(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

Appendix 8: Writing frame

Diary of *The Silence Seeker*



Date, greeting

- 23rd of August 2021
- Dear Diary

Paragraph 1: The day he met the boy

- **Topic sentence** (Most important event)
- How did you feel waking up? (When I woke up, I...)
- Who did you meet? (I met...)
- What did you see? (I saw...)
- How did you feel? (I felt...)

Paragraph 2: The night he disappeared

- **Topic sentence** (most important event)
- Did you escape?
- Did someone pick you up?
- Who was with you?
- How did you go? (by car/train/bus/plane/on foot)
- Was anyone after/following/chasing you?
- What were you feeling? (I felt...)
- Did you think about your new friend?

Paragraph 3: Dreams and hopes for tomorrow, the future

- **Topic sentence** (most important thought/hope/wish)
- Hopes for tomorrow and the future (I hope that...)
- What do you want? (I want to...)
- Where do you want to go? (I want to go to...)
- What are you dreaming about? (I am dreaming about.. +ing / I dream of.. +ing)

Paragraph 4: The ending

- **Ending** (Now I have to sleep/find a safe place. Goodbye, dear diary. I'll write more tomorrow. Love from. Best wishes.)

Appendix 9: Pictures of the Silence Seeker



(Morley & Pearce, 2009, n.p.)

Appendix 10: Picture of Human Rights



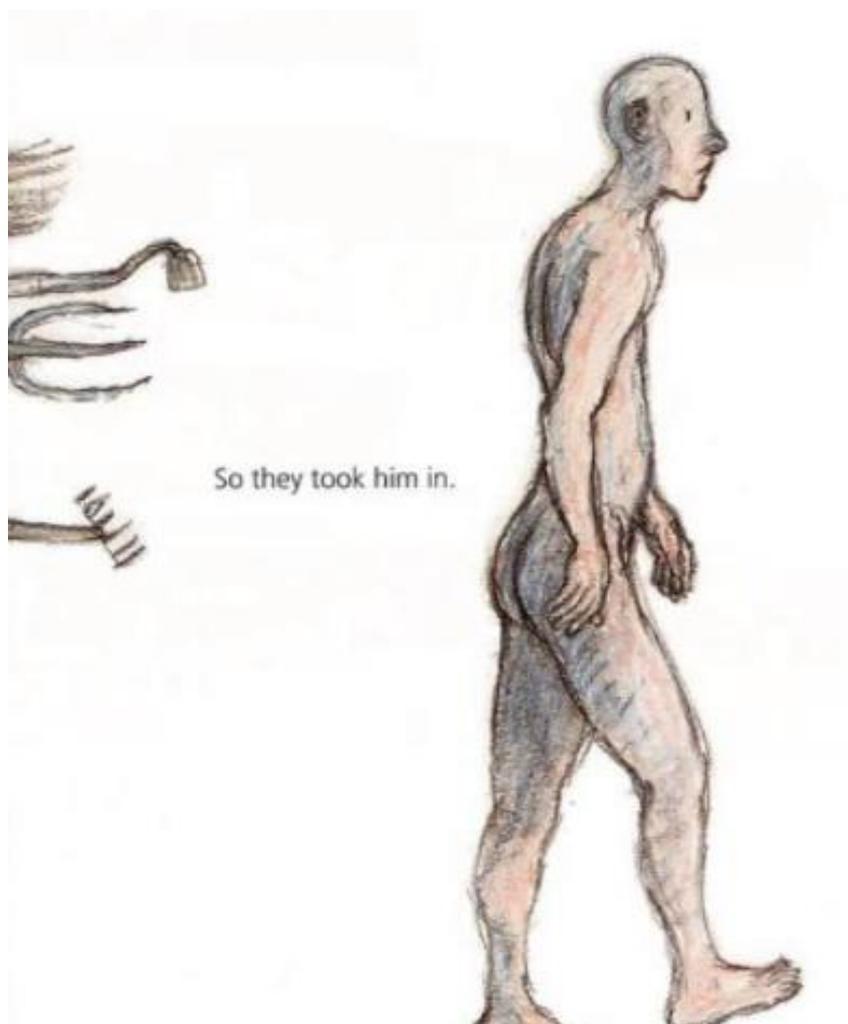
(Author unknown)

Appendix 11: Picture and text from *The Island*



“He wasn’t like them” (Greder, 2007, n.p.)

Appendix 12: Picture and text from *The Island*

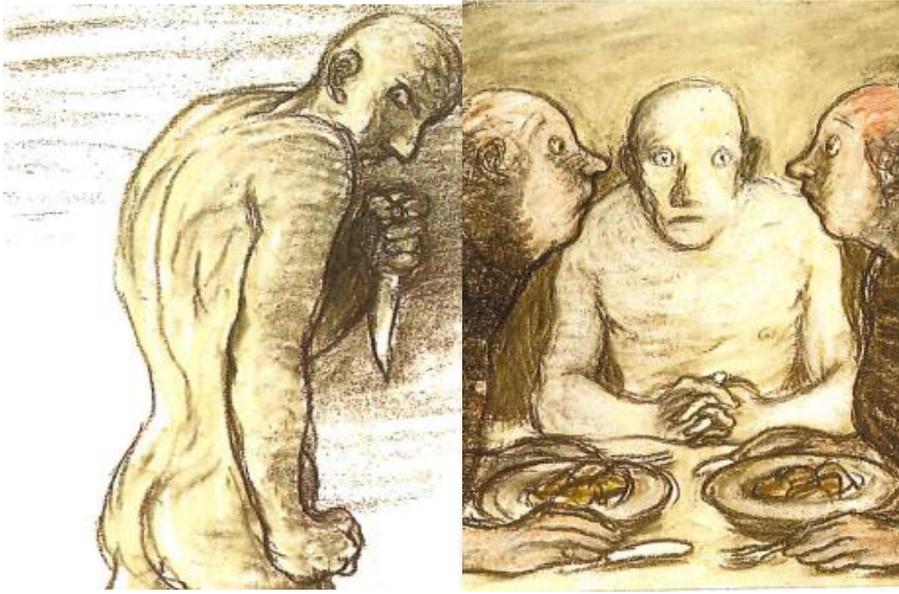


(Greder, 2007, n.p.)

Appendix 13: Word-bank: *The Island*

NOUNS	VERB PHRASES
<i>the stranger</i>	<i>he appeared</i>
<i>a raft</i>	<i>caused a commotion</i>
<i>a goat-pen</i>	<i>to spread fear</i>
<i>the inn/innkeeper</i>	<i>they grew restless</i>
<i>savages</i>	<i>they seized the man</i>
<i>the man's presence</i>	<i>to earn his keep</i>
	<i>carry heavy loads</i>
	<i>starve to death</i>

Appendix 14: Pictures of the stranger

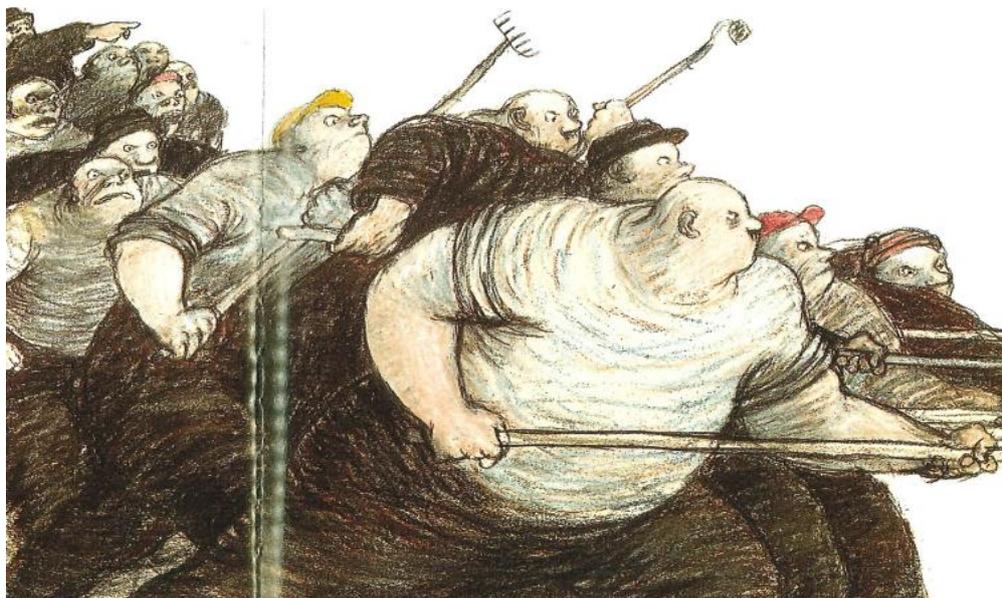


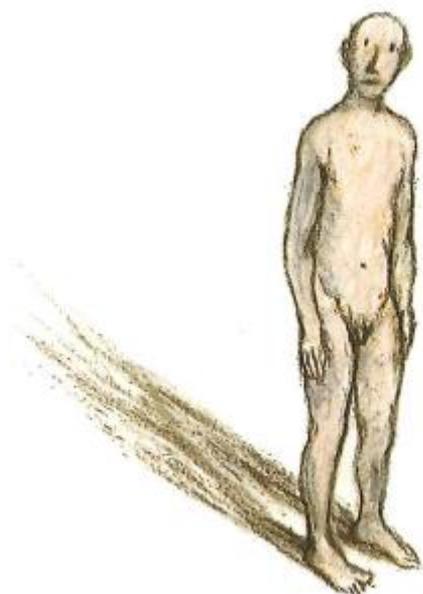
(Greder, 2007, n.p.)

Appendix 15: Reader Post

Reader Post:

Appendix 16: Pictures from *The Island*







(Greder, 2007, n.p.)

REFLECTION NOTE

The work with my masters' thesis is over, and I can look back on a period where I have learned much about how to teach English in more exciting, inspiring, and constructive ways, and where I have experienced the value of working hard and never to give up.

In the introductory part of the master's program, I especially appreciated the two modules about literature, and I soon decided to focus on children's literature in my master's thesis. Furthermore, after finishing the module on intercultural learning, and after being introduced to Eva Lambertsson Björk and Jutta Eschenbach and their project concerning intercultural communication and film, I decided to investigate how intercultural competence could be developed through literature.

My interest in multicultural picturebooks first started when I studied English at OsloMet in 2016/2017 and was introduced to Sissil Lea Heggernes' studies on intercultural competence and picturebooks, and it was also in this period I came across the wonderful picturebooks, *The Silence Seeker* (Morley & Pearce, 2009) and *The Island* (Greder, 2007), and started using them in my English teaching at Østli primary school in Nordre Follo.

Writing this thesis has not been as demanding as I had expected, however, there have been some challenges along the way. Firstly, since I had read so much theory about intercultural competence, reader-response, multicultural picturebooks, and visual literacy it was hard to limit the size of the theoretical part, leaving enough space for the practical part and the discussion. Secondly, I got a bit carried away when I was exploring the read-aloud, because, with my background as a drama teacher, I found this method both interesting and exciting. However, my supervisors convinced me to come back to my initial focus on visual literacy and the interplay between words and pictures in picturebooks, for which I am thankful. Otherwise, I would have had to rewrite almost my entire thesis. Thirdly, restricting the thesis statement was difficult, and something I repeatedly came back to during the process. However, I am satisfied with the outcome of my thesis, and I hope that my findings regarding how to use multicultural picturebooks to teach intercultural competence in the ESL primary school classroom can be useful to other teachers in the future.