Intercultural English Teaching in Norway for the 21ˢᵗ century

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Abstract: This chapter asks in what ways recent international developments around the notion of interculturality might enrich English language teaching (ELT) in Norway in tandem with the country's Core Curriculum and English curriculum. To understand the recent trends in intercultural research and their relevance to ELT, an historical background on the teaching of cultural content in the subject of English is provided. The role of interculturality in the Norwegian Core Curriculum and English curriculum is first considered through a textual analysis, then compared and contrasted to the curricula of 1974 and 2006. Next, issues currently under debate and further exploration in the field of interculturality are outlined, focusing particularly on static and dynamic perceptions of culture. Finally, implications for ELT are discussed and activities inspired by an intercultural pedagogy are suggested. In alignment with the focus on multimodal texts in the English subject curriculum and building on research into the affordances of picturebooks for language and intercultural learning, the author proposes that critical analysis of picturebooks and factual texts about topical issues can address the issues under debate. Through such activities, teachers can provide English language students with opportunities to engage the critical perspectives and symbolic competence required to navigate in the 21st century.

Introduction

In 1982, I turned ten and started to learn English in school. I looked forward to learning a new language, and I can still recall the excitement of opening my textbook *Hands Up* (Ashton et al., 1972). I could not wait to get to know Ann from England, Mack from Scotland, Pat from America,

and Sam from Africa (no specific country mentioned). The English subject curriculum at the time focused primarily on language learning, with an inserted progress-based list of vocabulary and grammar, and the main teaching tool was the textbook (Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, 1974, pp. 147, 170). The cultural content included knowledge about Great Britain, the USA, and the role of English in international communication.

Today, global perspectives are called for to meet the challenges the world is facing, something which is reflected in the Norwegian curriculum (Risager, 2021, p. xi). Lorentzen (2017) posits that the national curriculum of 1974 broke new ground in terms of global perspectives. Culture, religion, and ethnicity could no longer be seen merely through Norwegian eyes (Lorentzen, 2017), a first step towards recognizing the need for intercultural competence. Nearly thirty years later, international developments around the notion of interculturality are discernible in the revised English curriculum of LK20 and the textbook has lost its hegemony in favour of an open approach to texts (Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, 1974; Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2019). Two novel inclusions in the revised English subject curriculum are "intercultural competence" and "picture books" (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2019, pp. 3–6). Students should learn English and develop intercultural competence in their encounters with texts, which may include for example oral, written, digital, artistic, and multimodal texts (p. 3). The only textual types that are specified here include literature for grades 1–10, picturebooks[1] for grades 1–4 and factual texts for grades 5–10 (pp. 3–6).

This chapter asks: In what ways might recent international developments around the notion of interculturality enrich English language teaching (ELT) in Norway in tandem with the Core Curriculum and English curriculum? It builds on the trial lecture for my PhD on intercultural learning through picturebooks in the English language classroom

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[1]   In accordance with the conventions of picturebook research (for example Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), picturebooks is written as one word to underline the close connection between pictures and words.

(Heggernes, 2021). To understand the recent trends in intercultural research and their relevance to ELT, the first part of the chapter provides an historical background on the teaching of cultural content in the subject of English. I focus particularly on the static-dynamic dichotomy of perceptions of culture. Furthermore, I consider the role of interculturality in the Norwegian Core Curriculum and English curriculum through a textual analysis, comparing and contrasting it with the curricula of 1974 and 2006 (Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, 1974; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006/2013, 2019). Next, I will outline issues under debate and further exploration in the field. Finally, I will discuss implications for ELT through suggesting activities inspired by an intercultural pedagogy (Heggernes, 2021). In alignment with the focus on multimodal texts in LK20 and building on my research into the affordances of picturebooks for language and intercultural learning (Heggernes, 2021), I propose that critical analysis of picturebooks and factual texts about topical issues can address the issues under debate and foster intercultural and democratic skills.

Before I proceed, I will define some important terms. *Interculturality* is used as an "umbrella term for all intercultural interaction, including intercultural education". Intercultural education aims to foster intercultural competence, or intercultural communicative competence, or intercultural awareness, the differences between which will not discussed here (Allolio-Näcke, 2014). Interculturality is also a term used by some of the more critical scholars in the field (e.g. Dervin & Simpson, 2020).

In the field of education, a definition of intercultural learning is required, and my definition builds on Deardorff (2019), Byram (1997) and Dypedahl (2019). Intercultural learning can be defined as "the process of developing the attitudes, skills and knowledge required for constructive communication and behaviour when interacting across difference" (Heggernes, 2021), for example differences in age, occupation, political affiliation, or national belonging. I argue that critical engagement with multimodal texts can enrich ELT in Norway and promote intercultural learning.

Historical background

According to Risager (1989), the teaching of cultural topics in foreign language teaching (FLT) in the 1980s had three areas of focus. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the 1980s, the first of these included the cognitive development of the student, who was to learn factual knowledge about English-speaking countries. This focus is evident as far back as the English subject curriculum from 1974; interestingly, it is still discernible in the quote from a teacher I interviewed in 2017 in connection with the pilot study for my PhD (see Heggernes, 2021): "As regards culture in the subject of English, I believe that one should offer students a taste of social conditions, geography, art, and literature from English-speaking countries". The teacher's perception also aligns with LK06, the curriculum at the time (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006/2013), and is discernible in textbooks from this period (Lund, 2012, pp. 47–48). The second focus involved skills for appropriate communication with native speakers, such as knowing how to use courteous phrases and understand differences in communicative styles between one's own context and that of the target language. The third focus was on developing "attitudes towards other countries and cultures" (Lund, 2007, p. 31). According to Lund (2007), this attitudinal component, which entailed fostering empathy, tolerance, and respect for other cultures, was introduced in the Norwegian English subject curriculum in 1997, L97 (Lund, 2007, p. 32).

Accordingly, there has been a development of culture teaching in FLT/ELT from conveying facts about the geography and what is frequently referred to as "Big C" culture, namely the best of what a culture has to offer in the arts and literature, to knowledge of "small c" culture, including the everyday habits, norms, and traditions of native speakers (Risager, 2018, p. 40). The goal was to be able to communicate appropriately and effectively, gain knowledge about other cultures, and show tolerance and respect in order to mediate between differing cultural perspectives. In this manner one may gain a shared understanding, in alignment with Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Today, the cultural content of the subject of English in Norway has changed significantly, as it has been

influenced by international developments in connection with the notion of interculturality.

Different approaches to interculturality

In the following section, the notion of interculture will be explored, intersecting with some of the debates in the field of interculturality today. While *inter* simply means between, *culture* is less easily defined, and there is no unified definition. Some scholars even claim that culture is "no longer a useful concept" (Dervin, 2016, p. 13; Holliday, 2010). This argument is countered by Byram and Wagner, who claim that "as a part of common parlance and language teachers' vocabulary, culture is arguably a pedagogically useful concept" (2018, p. 142). They maintain that in a language-learning context, it is necessary to simplify "before adding complexity" (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p. 142).

A simple definition of culture is that it relates to the shared products, perspectives, and practices of a group (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1999). This definition could obviously be problematized, but before "adding complexity", teachers could ask their students to think about and discuss what those products, perspectives, and practices might be for themselves and others. In my introductory class to interculturality with student teachers in Norway, I often ask them to close their eyes and think of the word *school*. When they describe what they see, they often mention either material objects such as buildings, desks, chairs, and blackboards, or emotional connotations, such as happy pupils. Then I show them a picture from a British school where pupils are wearing uniforms and ask them if this picture corresponds to their vision of a school. In most groups, the answer is "no". I repeat the same question using a picture from Afghanistan, where children are seated on the floor of a tent with their teacher in front of them. Again, the answer is "no", unless the group contains students with a background from this region. This exercise allows us to have a discussion of how the same word may have different connotations depending on your background. Exchanging *school* with another cultural product, for instance *bread*, may reveal that people living in the same place can have different perceptions of a

presumably shared cultural product. Yet, many people will say that they feel a sense of belonging to a particular culture, whether that be a national culture or a co-culture, one related to for example shared interests, work, and/or religion.

Nevertheless, in what is an increasingly globalized, hyperconnected world, the concept of culture cannot be easily pinned down. For example, the discussions of what a national culture is never lead to clear answers; instead, they tend to create insiders and outsiders, which is the exact opposite of the aim of intercultural education. Indeed, in the 21st century, culture is a dynamic and fluid phenomenon (Holliday, 2010). Commenting on the question of cultural belonging, another teacher I interviewed for my pilot study (Heggernes, 2021) stated:

> I'm Norwegian, but I've been living for a long time in Groruddalen,[2] and I used to have an African partner. Also, I've some friends from Sri Lanka, and from different countries in Africa, and my sister lives in Switzerland. I feel I can roam freely. I'm not so tied to any one culture. I believe that values are more important.

Values are an innate part of culture, and culture is tied to notions of identity; moreover, people's identities are multiple in nature. The question is whether there is a stable core, which is an ontological question related to the nature of reality. Considering culture through a theoretical lens, one may ask if culture even exists? A second question is: Are identities stable entities or constructed ones, being essentially representations that may change depending on the context or interaction in which one finds oneself (Dervin, 2016, pp. 14–15)?

Dervin (2016) distinguishes between solid and liquid approaches to interculturality, which he relates to a static or dynamic perception of culture. According to Holliday (2020), this is linked to the differing paradigms of postpositivism and the conviction that truth, or in this context, culture, exists, and the postmodern paradigm, where the existence of a clear truth is rejected. It follows that descriptions of culture are always ideological and hence variable. Dervin (2016) adds the Janusian approach

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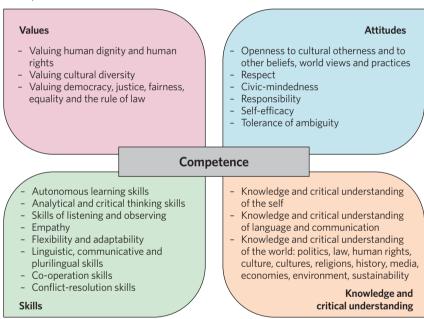
2   A multicultural area of Oslo.

in the middle, as exemplified by Byram's (1997) model, which has had a huge influence internationally on teaching, curriculum development, and research. The Janusian approach aligns with Holiday's description of the neo-essentialist approach to the intercultural. While these approaches claim that they pay attention to cultural diversity, they still tend to link culture to nations, as indicated by the prefix "inter" in "intercultural", which assumes "two" (for example having "interaction" between representatives of two nation-states). A more apt way of describing communication in the 21st century could be through using the prefix "trans", meaning "across" or "through", which has been suggested by e.g. Risager (2018) and Welsch (1999) and which focalizes the dynamic aspects of communication. Yet others, e.g., Osler and Starkey (2018), prefer to use the term "critical cosmopolitan", to represent the global fusion of cultures that are to be navigated by world citizens.

In terms of teaching practices, the terminological disputes prefigured by essentialist and non-essentialist approaches to culture are still relevant because the tradition of having the cultural teaching of EFL present facts about English-speaking countries is so strong (Fenner, 2018, p. 218). A static approach to culture can also be discerned in textbooks, and Brown and Habegger-Conti's (2017) study of English textbooks, published in Norway before 2009, shows how this can lead to stereotyped visual representations of indigenous peoples. To the best of my knowledge, however, no one in the intercultural field self-identifies as being willing to take an essentialist approach. Rather, there is a consensus that culture is dynamic. A valuable outcome of this debate and other debates in the field is, however, the continued efforts of theory building and the creation of more nuanced models of interculturality that are reflective of 21st century realities.

The Council of Europe's work informs teaching, assessment, and policy development across Europe. In 2018, a new *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) was launched by the Council of Europe (2018), aimed at teachers and education policymakers and developed by an expert group alongside teachers, teacher educators and school administrators. The RFCDC is the result of the work of an expert group which has critically analysed 101 models and frameworks

"of democratic competence, civic competence and intercultural competence" (Barrett & Byram, 2020, p. 79). It includes a model of the competences required for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2018, ch. 6). The model shown in Table 1 signals a shift in focus, highlighting democratic competences of which intercultural competence is "an essential component … when citizens live in culturally diverse democratic societies" (Barrett & Byram, 2020, p. 78). Both of these overlapping competences are salient in the Norwegian Core Curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

Table 1. The Competences Required for Democratic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe, 2018)

Values
- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

Competence

Skills
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

The publication of the RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018) has not succeeded in silencing the debate in the field over essentialist and non-essentialist approaches.[3] Rather than creating dichotomies, however, I believe that it is more useful to consider a continuum between static and dynamic approaches to culture, and maintaining a critical, honest, and

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3   Those who are interested in following the debate can read Simpson and Dervin's (2019) criticism of the Reference Framework, and Barrett and Byram's rebuttal (2020).

humble dialogue concerning how we sometimes draw on both essentialist and non-essentialist frames of reference in our teaching and research with respect to intercultural understanding (Greek, 2008; Van Maele & Messelink, 2019). Despite having the best intentions, ideals are not always enacted, and adopting a humble approach to our own position and teaching practices can create fertile ground for dialogue. Consequently, rather than continuing the discussion above, I will consider the role of interculturality in the Norwegian ELT context as well as some of the other issues currently under debate.

The Norwegian context for ELT and new areas of focus

To address the role of interculturality in LK20, I have conducted a textual analysis of Norway's Core Curriculum and English subject curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, 2020). The analysis is informed by discourse analysis, understood broadly as an analysis of discourse in context and its alternative interpretations (Cohen et al., 2017, pp. 686–687). The focus is therefore on words, phrases, and terminology relating to interculturality, including, but not limited to, *culture*, *interculture* and *multiculture*, *perspectives*, *dialogue*, *democracy*, *critical*, *difference,* and *diversity* in addition to expressions related to language use, such as *English* and *world*. I have considered how the language is used in context and in light of the educational discourse and debates in the field of interculturality (as outlined above). To highlight how the changes in LK20 reflect trends in the field of interculturality, I compare LK20 to both the preceding curriculum, LK06, and the curriculum from 1974. The latter is considered to be a suitable historical reference, as it introduced a stronger focus on global perspectives (Lorentzen, 2017).

Norway has a national curriculum consisting of a Core Curriculum that outlines the basic values and principles of all subjects and the subject curricula that include the content and aims of individual subjects. The Core Curriculum is informed by The Education Act, whose opening clause states that education should "open doors to the world and the future" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016, § 1–1).

The influence of the RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018) on the Norwegian Core Curriculum (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2017) is readily apparent; in the Table of Contents, in addition to *critical thinking skills*, the values *human dignity*, *cultural diversity*, and *democracy* are clearly highlighted. Further, the main text includes a focus on *human rights*, *respect*, *empathy*, *knowledge, and critical understanding of the environment*. Yet, there is a tension between what Holliday (2020) might have called a neo-essentialist approach to Norwegian values and the desire to be inclusive in that the Core Curriculum is based on a "shared Norwegian heritage building on Christian and humanistic values that are also present in other religions and respect for human rights" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Nevertheless, the Core Curriculum advances that differences should be recognized and valued as a resource, that multilingualism is an asset, and that diversity contributes to building a good society (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

Next, even though fostering intercultural learning is an interdisciplinary concern, this section pertains to the English subject curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019) whose structure is outlined in Table 2:

Table 2. The Structure of the English Subject Curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019)

Relevance and central values
Core elements
– Communication
– Language learning
– Working with texts in English
Interdisciplinary topics
– Health and life skills
– Democracy and citizenship
Basic skills
– Oral skills, writing, reading & digital skills
Competence aims and assessment
– Year 2, 4, 7 and 10

Already in 1974, it was the role of education "to contribute to international understanding and peace between peoples and nations" (Ministry

of Education and Church Affairs, 1974, p. 12). Three decades later, LK06 opened up the opportunity for intercultural learning. According to LK06, learning English could, for example, lead to "understanding and respect between people of differing cultural backgrounds … and strengthen democratic engagement and citizenship" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006/2013). However, the term itself was absent from the curriculum (Heggernes, 2014). Nonetheless, interculturality plays a much more prominent role in LK20. For instance, most of the section on "relevance and central values" of the English subject curriculum relates to intercultural competence, which involves "develop[ing] the pupils' understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019, p. 2). Through "working with text", students will develop intercultural competence, which will in turn "enable … them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019, p. 3). It will also help them learn about their own and "others'" identities in a multilingual and multicultural context" (p. 3). Furthermore, the concept of democracy and citizenship, which is closely related to intercultural competence in the RFCDC (Council of Europe, 2018), is one of the interdisciplinary topics here.

In comparison with LK06, LK20 has a stronger focus on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (see Jenkins et al., 2011). Indeed, the focus in LK06 on knowledge about inner-circle countries (Kachru, 1985) like Great Britain and the USA has been abandoned in favour of exploring "ways of living … thinking … and diversity in the English-speaking world" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006/2013; 2019, p. 9). The English-speaking world, however, is not defined, which could elicit discussions about what parts of the world are included. Further, the English subject curriculum recognises that communication in English often takes place between non-native speakers, perhaps even more frequently than between native and non-native speakers. It follows that no specific variety of English is advanced in LK20, in direct contrast to the 1974 curriculum that required Norwegian students to learn British RP, although it could be useful on occasion to listen to other varieties

of English (Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, 1974, p. 149). The inspiration from ELF theory aligns with the focus on multilingualism in LK20; students are to "experience that speak[ing] multiple languages is an asset" (Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2019, p. 2).

More recent textbooks for ELT in Norway expand the linguistic and cultural contexts presented to pupils. One example is Madsen and Mohammad-Roe's (2016) *Connect* for 8th grade, which opens with the chapter "A world of English". First-year lower secondary pupils get to know bilingual Abeo from Nigeria, who has grown up speaking English and Yoruba, and Katja from Finland, who frequently used English words when chatting with friends. These are both intercultural speakers who practice their ICC daily.

Some issues under debate in the field of interculturality

Even if IC has become an established part of LK20, the field itself continues to discuss how to understand, define, and operationalise ICC. For example, in "The Evolution of ICC", Hoff (2020) discusses "conceptualisations, critiques and consequences for 21st century classroom practice" (p. 55). She highlights five central issues under debate in the field (Hoff, 2020, p. 57). The first issue is related to *culture and identity*, which is connected to the static-dynamic dichotomy accounted for above and the perception that people might feel a sense of belonging to multiple cultures and identities. The second issue revolves around *the aims of intercultural dialogue*: Should intercultural speakers aim to mediate between differing cultural perspectives in order to arrive at a shared understanding, which is a harmonizing approach (Byram, 1997), or should we, as Hoff (2014) suggests, recognize the potential for fruitful intercultural dialogue in conflicts? In pluralistic and fragmented societies, it may not be possible to arrive at "a platform of shared values" (Hoff, 2020, p. 60); rather, we may have to agree to disagree. Hoff argues that accepting to live in what Iversen (2014) refers to as a "community of disagreement" may lead to deep engagement and more honest intercultural dialogues where the participants do not brush disagreements under the carpet. Similar arguments have been

made by Kramsch (1993), who already in the early nineties stated that it was necessary to teach culture as difference, and Lund (2012), who called for a more systematic approach to dealing with cultural differences in ELT textbooks.

Third, the *contexts for communication* must become more varied. Many studies in the intercultural field highlight the intercultural skills required for effective communication when abroad (for example Çiftçi & Karaman, 2018; Jackson, 2011). Citizens of multicultural societies, however, deploy intercultural skills every day both in their immediate surroundings and as parties to a global community online. It is therefore a democratic concern that students learn to critically analyse a variety of communicative settings; physical, digital, and multimodal. How may, for example, the design of a web page or a picturebook affect how cultural content is communicated? The fourth issue, *de-centring of discourses*, is related to the "critical turn" (Dasli & Diaz, 2017). A critical analysis of discourse is required of curricula for intercultural learning. This type of examination can reveal what is said – how, by whom, and why – and who is represented or not. The fifth issue is how to *assess learners' ICC*, or if this is even advisable. This is because while intercultural knowledge and skills may be unproblematic to assess, is it ethically correct to assess learners' values and attitudes (Borghetti, 2017)? Due to the limited format of this chapter, I will not probe this issue further. However, in alignment with the international trends in the field of interculturality and the aforementioned policy documents, I propose *citizenship and democratic skills* as a sixth issue. Citizenship and democratic skills can be related to social justice and a call to take action for people to preserve, protect and develop democracy.

All these issues relate in different ways to *symbolic competence*. Kramsch and Whiteside (2015) define symbolic competence as the ability to manipulate language as a symbolic system for effective intercultural communication. The process involves an understanding of how communication is constructed through multi-layered discourses. This knowledge is required to reveal underlying conflicts and imbalanced power relations that may be concealed by the ideal of effective and appropriate communication. With this in mind, ELT teachers can activate students' symbolic competence through engaging students in critical analysis of discourse.

I propose that a focus on symbolic competence is one answer to how recent international developments related to the notion of interculturality may enrich English teaching in Norway and beyond. Furthermore, questions of representation and power dynamics need to inform teachers' selection of materials and activities for teaching and learning. I see critical analysis of discourse as a democratic skill, one that is vital for our ability to navigate the flow of information to which we are all exposed. Furthermore, I suggest an intercultural pedagogy that takes a holistic approach to EL teaching and learning that "engages students both cognitively and affectively" through a wide range of "challenging readings [and] aesthetic experiences" (Heggernes, 2021, p. 105). Through student-centred approaches, the students are activated, allowed to take advantage of their own experiences and given agency to contribute and engage with one another's ideas in critical dialogue (p. 105). In the following section I will suggest some examples of how an intercultural pedagogy can enrich English teaching in Norway and beyond through addressing the issues under debate as discussed above.

Activities inspired by an intercultural pedagogy

In a visually saturated society, the picturebook is one of the multimodal formats that can add to the variety of contexts for communication called for by Hoff. A picturebook conveys meaning through picture – text interaction. Sometimes, the pictures and words tell the same story; at other times, they extend or challenge one another (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006). Critically engaging with picturebooks to make sense of their cultural and symbolic content can include both emergent and advanced readers. Hence, the picturebook is an inclusive format with particular affordances for intercultural learning (Heggernes, 2020).

Davies and Cobb's (2018) *The Day War Came* is a picturebook that could be used to stimulate young learners' respect and empathy with others. It can also teach young people to value human dignity and human rights perspectives as well as critically engage with the democracy in which they live. *The Day War Came* (Davies & Cobb, 2018) relates the story of a child who, after fleeing from war, searches for a school; however,

she is turned away from the school, as there is no chair available for her to sit on. When the other schoolchildren hear this, though, they themselves bring in chairs from home "so all the children here can come to school".

One of the opening spreads depicts a girl and her classmates sitting at their desks drawing volcanoes. To activate students, the teacher can ask them to look at the picture and tell each other what they see there. In terms of language learning, this allows the students to use familiar vocabulary, such as desks, chairs, drawings, etc., and learn new words, such as "erupting volcanoes". A follow-up question could be to ask students what in the picture is similar to their own classroom, followed by what differences they see. This question allows all students to draw on their own experiences while learning about those of others. When examining the illustration, pupils may spot the helicopters and in the distance wonder why they are there. Although the illustration resembles many a Western classroom, it is accompanied by the following words: "Then, just after lunch, the war came".

Figure 1. Davies & Cobb (2018), *The Day War Came* (Cover) © Rebecca Cobb

The background for the book is the UK government's refusal to provide sanctuary to 3,000 unaccompanied child refugees from Syria in 2016, including the story of a refugee child who had been refused access to a school, as there was no chair for her (Davies & Cobb, 2018). This sparked a Twitter campaign called "#3000 chairs" where people posted pictures of empty chairs in solidarity with refugee children and inspired the creation of the picturebook.

The story is told in the first person and gives a voice to an underrepresented group, namely child refugees. Including it in ELT can be a step towards representing multiple groups of people and perspectives and de-centring the curriculum. It could stimulate discussions on how immigration leads to exposure to different cultural contexts and languages and how that may affect one's cultural perspectives and identities. A particularly interesting point is that in this story the most striking difference is the one between the perspectives of adults and children, rather than between people of different national identities. In *The Day War Came* (Davies & Cobb, 2018), the conflict is resolved, but in real life, conflicts surrounding acceptance of refugees are all too real and may well be a part of students' daily lives. Accordingly, dialogues relating to the story can accommodate experiential learning where students can draw on their own experiences and knowledge. To foster democratic citizenship children could partake in similar campaigns for social justice or start their own.[4]

Students are likely to have differing attitudes to the treatment of refugees, which highlights the need for a dialogic approach. An intercultural dialogue allows students to practice skills of mediation and/or how to live in a community of disagreement (Byram, 1997; Hoff, 2014; Iversen, 2014). Older students may critically analyse how words and pictures are used in different types of texts, which allows a wider range of communicative contexts in intercultural education, addressing the questions of what is said, by whom, how, when, and where. They can, for example, consider whose interests are served by the following arguments raised by

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4   The many children who are raising funds in support of Ukrainian refugees, at the time of writing this chapter, show children's capacity to act as democratic citizens in support of social justice.

Conservative MP Karen Bradley from a debate in the British House of Commons on the vote to remove child refugee protections from immigration law (Canary, 2020):

> If we want to stop the small boats, if we want to stop the migrants being under the wheel arches of vehicles … we need to deal with it by making sure there is a safe and legal passage.
>
> If I can quote Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who said, "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river, we need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in".

The students can discuss how the MP chooses words to make the argument that removing protections for child refugees will ultimately protect "migrants" / "people", and the effect of quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu, including his religious title for added ethos.

Arguably a sensible argument, it is worth considering different perspectives, including who are left out and not given a voice. Another source, Careappointments (Wheeler et al., 2020) relates the experiences of "the lone child refugees … the unaccompanied children in the EU" who will no longer have the right "to be relocated with close relatives" because the Government has "stripp[ed] out their protections". A different grammatical subject, "the lone child refugees", and choice of words tells a different story through appealing to our emotions. The article is accompanied by a picture of Labour peer Lord Dubs, who had successfully campaigned for the amendment declaring that refugee children would still have the right to remain in the UK. The knowledge that Lord Dubs fled the Nazis as a child on the *Kindertransport* underlines his ethos and adds to the pathos of the text.

Through a critical analysis of different types of texts relating to a topical issue and how words and pictures are used to affect us, students can develop intercultural and democratic skills. The analysis should also include the sources themselves, including their biases and our own positionality. My choice of texts can be critiqued as they are all created by privileged white, Western, middle-aged/elderly women and men, even if they do represent other perspectives. Did I unconsciously select these texts because I am also white, Western, middle-aged and privileged?

Indeed, it should be recognized that as I focus on a Norwegian context and draw on intercultural theory from European and American scholars, the discussion in this chapter is part of a largely Western discourse. Recognizing one's positionality can contribute to humble, honest and critical dialogue about how this may affect the selection of texts for ELT. These choices influence who is given a voice, who we learn about, and who is given the opportunity to explore both their own and others' identities and cultures in ELT. A lesson learnt from the field of multiculturalism is the importance of allowing people to represent themselves and tell their own stories. In this respect, teachers can make a huge difference in support of equal representation and opportunities for all students. A varied, de-centred, multimodal curricula that includes a diversity of cultures and identities can provide fertile ground for critical intercultural dialogues that educate democratic citizens.

Conclusion

This chapter started with a brief historical overview of the teaching of cultural content in ELT. I delineated the debate around essentialist and non-essentialist approaches to culture to show how static or dynamic approaches to culture impact approaches to cultural content in ELT, primarily focusing on texts. My first years of learning EFL in the 1980s were dominated by textbooks with a static and stereotyped presentation of cultures. Today, children grow up in what is a much more pluralistic society, which requires adopting a more dynamic and critical approach to intercultural education.

Considering the role of interculturality in the Norwegian Core Curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) and English curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019), in addition to the issues for debate in the field and new models, 21st century world citizens require a wide array of texts that show a variety of contexts in which English is spoken. I propose that we move beyond the static-dynamic dichotomy to entertain critical, honest, and humble dialogue on how we draw on combinations of essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives in our research and teaching to foster

intercultural learning in ELT. This stance is not always a complacent one; on the contrary, it requires a willingness to both take the perspective of the other and reconsider one's own perspective in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It recognizes the potential of fruitful intercultural dialogue when conflicting views arise, as called for by Hoff (2014, 2020). This type of dialogue does not always lead to agreement; instead, it entails living in a community of disagreement (Iversen, 2014). However, it also involves the potential for more honest intercultural dialogue, as one learns to understand other perspectives when acknowledging existing conflicts.

The recent international developments related to the notions of interculturality that have been accounted for in this chapter revolve around questions of representation, power dynamics, and a call for action. I propose that these developments can enrich ELT in Norway and beyond, in tandem with the country's Core Curriculum and English curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, 2019). Through student-centred, experiential and dialogic approaches to intercultural learning, teachers can provide EL students with opportunities to engage in the critical perspectives and symbolic competence required to navigate in the 21st century.

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