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## **Abstract**

The current study centres around the topics culture and critical literacy. The aim of the thesis was to investigate the understanding of the concept of culture among year 5 EFL pupils and determine whether and how their understandings changed after a critical literacy project. To the researcher's knowledge, no prior studies have examined the pupils' perspective on the concept of culture.

The study involved conducting a critical literacy intervention, which was pre-planned utilising the instructional model of critical literacy proposed by Lewison et al. (2015). The intervention consisted of eight lessons conducted in three classes over a four-week period. Data was collected from pre- and post-groups interviews and learner artifacts from the critical literacy intervention. The interviews consisted of interview tasks and semi-structured interviewed question. A total of 35 pupils agreed to participate in the study, and learner artifacts were collected from 7 groups formed by the consenting pupils. There were three interview groups, one representing each class, consisting of four to five participants in each group. The data obtained were analysed thematically, and Nvivo software was used to categorise the data into five main themes.

The study findings revealed that the pupils' initial understandings of the concept of culture were primarily centred around cultural artifacts. Moreover, culture was significantly perceived as being connected countries, and there was a highlighting of historical aspects related to Norwegian national culture. However, the post-interviews demonstrated a positive shift in the pupils' understanding of culture, recognising it as a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly changing. Additionally, participants acknowledge that culture extends beyond a specific country, acknowledging the view of culture being made up of countless human groupings that can be seen as 'small cultures'. Furthermore, during the post-interviews, there was also a significant emphasis on culture with the everyday life as a prominent theme. Both the pre-and post-interviews reported that the pupils' reflected on cultural disrespect by providing examples related to real-life problems. Overall, the post-interviews revealed that the pupils embraced the cultural views promoted by the critical literacy project, and it is argued that this can contribute to their development of intercultural competence.

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis presents a qualitative study on year 5 English as a foreign language (EFL) pupils' understanding on the concept of culture. More specifically, the study investigates whether the pupils' understandings of the concept of culture changes after a critical literacy intervention, and if so in what ways. In the following, an overview of the study's relevance will be presented, followed by the research question and aim, and the thesis' outline.

## 1.1 Culture in the LK 20 curriculum

The way culture is understood in language teaching has undergone several changes over the course of the last century, which can make it difficult for teachers to understand what to implement in their classrooms. The current national curriculum in Norway, LK20, refers to culture in several ways. For example, the importance of culture is recognised in the curriculum regarding the English subject, as it states that “English is an important subject when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, all-round education, and identity development” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 2). Additionally, the subject is expected to provide the pupils with “the foundation for communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 2). Furthermore, culture is also explicitly referred to in an aim after year 7, i.e., “investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b, p. 7). As such, the LK20 illustrates the relevance culture generally has to the English curriculum, which also supports the relevance of this thesis.

Intercultural learning is a culture approach that is referred to in the English subject. In the English core curriculum, it is stated among other things that “English shall help the pupils to develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking, and communication patterns” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 2). This intercultural approach prioritises the learner's ability to understand and respect each other across all types of cultural barriers, which is in contrast with the narrower aim of achieving the linguistic or pragmatic

competence of a native speaker (Council of Europe, 2023a). Hence, the curriculum illustrates explicitly the significance of fostering the learners' development of intercultural competence in the English subject. To increase pupils' intercultural competence, pupils' understandings of culture are relevant as some cultural views do not align with the development of intercultural competence. As such, investigating pupils' understandings of culture are relevant for intercultural competence.

## **1.2 Critical literacy in the LK 20 curriculum**

While the curriculum emphasises a focus on the pupils' intercultural learning and provides some focal points, such as reflecting on cultural belonging and differing viewpoints, it remains relatively open when it comes to how this should be achieved in the classroom. One approach to this could be critical literacy, an approach to literacy that focuses on the social and cultural aspects surrounding the creation and interpretation of texts. It is appropriate to mention that critical literacy is not explicitly mentioned in LK20, with the term critical mostly being used in the sense of “applying reason in an inquisitive and systematic way when working with specific practical challenges, phenomena, expressions and forms of knowledge” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p.7). However, the curriculum encompasses various aspects that align with a critical literacy approach. For example, in the core curriculum it highlighted that pupils “must be able to [...] think critically about how knowledge is developed” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 7), which can align with pupils engaging in the critical literacy practice of disrupting the commonplace to gain conscious awareness on “things that seem normal need to be re-thought” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 8).

Furthermore, critical literacy focuses on the social and cultural context of text production and reception with the emphasis that no text is neutral. This understanding of critical literacy corresponds with the English subject's core values, as it states “by [...] critically assessing different types of texts, the pupils shall acquire knowledge of culture and society. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 7). Regarding the English curriculum, an extra factor that complies with critical literacy is the concept of “intercultural understanding of different ways of living and thinking” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a, p. 7). This concept aligns with critical literacy which emphasises that through examining multiple viewpoints the pupils explore and understand different ways of being and thinking beyond their own (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 10). This view of critical literacy corresponds with the expectations



presented in the English subject's curriculum. Moreover, in the current study, critical literacy is seen as a useful method to achieve the curriculum aims associated to culture.

### **1.3 The research question and aims of the study**

As argued in the previous sections, culture and intercultural learning are relevant topic in the LK20 curriculum, which emphasises the relevance of this study. Investigating pupils' understandings of culture is crucial as it allows us to adapt pedagogical approaches that resonate with their existing beliefs and practices. By gaining insight to their cultural perspectives, one can further develop intercultural competence among pupils. Utilising critical literacy when teaching pupils about culture can help them develop a more nuanced understandings on diverse cultural identities and can promote active participating in creating an inclusive world, thereby promoting the achievement of intercultural competence. Given that culture is a prominent aspect in the LK20, the study wants to further investigate the field of culture in language study.

While previous research has investigated teacher and university students' views of culture (e.g. Lotveit & Bugge 2020; Alvares & Bonilla, 2009), no previous studies have explored younger learners' understandings of culture, highlighting a research gap. Although prior research has investigated cultural themes through critical literacy approaches, the investigation of the concept of culture itself remains unexplored. Therefore, this study provides insight on the pupils' understanding of the concept of culture through critical literacy. The aim of this study is to investigate the pupils' understandings of the concept of culture and whether their understandings of culture changes after a critical literacy project. Thus, the study addresses the following research question:

- Do year 5 EFL pupils' understandings of the concept of culture change after a critical literacy project, and if so in what ways?

The views of culture encouraged by the LK20 curriculum focus on culture in the everyday life and intercultural competence. The study therefore examines the pupils' interpretations of culture and explores whether these align with the intended teachings of the curriculum. Moreover, it investigates potential changes in the pupils' understandings of culture following a critical literacy project that emphasises these cultural perspectives.

For a comprehensive overview of the study, it is necessary to outline the data collection methods, critical literacy intervention design and participant details. Data was collected through pre- and post-group interviews and an analysis of the learner artifacts produced during the intervention. The groups interviews consisted of two interview tasks and semi-structured interview questions. Furthermore, the critical literacy intervention was planned by utilising the instructional model of critical literacy from Lewison et al. (2015) and consisted of eight lessons in three classes over a period of four weeks. A total of 35 pupils agreed to participate in this study. The learner artifacts collected during the intervention were from 7 groups created out of the 35 pupils who gave their consent. There were three interview groups, with one group representing each class, and each group consisting of four to five participants.

## **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis consists of seven primary chapters. After the introductory chapter, chapter 2 outline the theoretical perspectives employed in the study and previous studies are presented in chapter 3. The methodology chapter (chapter 4) discusses the data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations in this study. In chapter 5, the findings are presented based on the researcher's in-depth analysis of the thematic approach described in the methodology chapter. Chapter 6 presents a detailed discussion of the findings and analysis in connection to the theory and previous studies presented in chapter 2 and 3. Lastly, chapter 7 summarises the main findings of the research in relation to the research question. It also examines the study's implications and limitations and suggests potential avenues for future research.

## **2.Theoretical Background**

This chapter presents relevant literature about the concepts of culture and critical literacy, which are both central to this thesis. The chapter is divided into two main sections, addressing the concepts of culture and critical literacy respectively. In the culture section, a quick overview from different culture fields will be presented. Then, culture views connected to language teaching will be presented. In the critical literacy section, an overview is first provided of what critical literacy is, focusing on its origins and various realisations. Following this, a more detailed account of the instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2015), which guided the intervention conducted for the current study, will be presented.

### **2.1 What is culture?**

Culture might be one of the most difficult terms to define in English. Since the concept of culture is used in many different fields there are several theories as to what culture entails (Williams, 1976 in Jenks, 2004, p. 1; Hall et al., 2013). Jenks (2004) describes the concept of culture people use in their everyday lives as “a descriptive and concrete category” (p. 12) which is viewed as the collective frame of arts and intellectual work in one’s society. This view of culture can be called ‘mass culture’ or the ‘popular culture’ of an age (Hall et al., 2013). Similarly, a traditional definition of culture is ‘the sum of great ideas’, that is, the classic works of literature, paintings, music, and physiology, which is called the ‘high culture’ of an age. (Hall et al., 2013, p. xvii). These views of culture share a commonality in their ability to influence society by shaping and reflecting its cultural identity.

Within the fields of sociology and anthropology, culture is viewed more broadly than the definitions above. Although sociologists and anthropologists consider the concept of culture in a variety of ways, culture can be described as human societies learned and ideational aspects (Jenks, 2004, p. 8). Moreover, a ‘way of life’ in a community, nation, or society is a common approach among anthropologists, while ‘shared values’ of a society emphasise a sociological perspective (Hall et al., 2013, p. xviii). Within the field of foreign language teaching, similar definitions of culture can be found in for example Kramsch (1998, in Kramsch, 2006), where she defines culture as “membership in a discourse community that

shares a common social space and history, common imaginings” (p. 17). This definition highlights the idea of culture providing a principle for people to unite (Jenks, 2004, p. 8).

Due to globalization and the development of global information technologies, Kramersch’s (2015) presents two characteristics of culture: (1) *culture as mobile* and (2) *culture schema as changing over time* (Meadows, 2016, p. 160). The second characteristic Kramersch (2015) presents defines culture as portable schemas of interpretation of situations that have been developed through socialisation, which change over time as people migrate or communicate with different societies (p. 409). This definition of culture is popular within the language study field as culture is affected by the globalization of the world (Kramersch, 2015 p. 413).

### **2.1.2 Essentialist and non-essentialist views of culture**

Holliday (2000) presents two significant views of culture, namely essentialist and non-essentialist views. From an essentialist view, culture is seen as a concrete structure that is represented through the characterisation of a particular nation. Hofstede (1991, in Holliday, 2000) is a theorist that is often associated with the essentialist view. His work was based on the characteristics which differentiate national cultures, although he underlines how one should be cautious about national stereotyping. Hofstede (1991, in Holliday, 2000) presents geographical maps which exhibit a world divided into cultural bubbles. Culture from this view is “physical entities, which can be seen, touched and experienced by others” (Holliday, 2001, p. 1). Simply put, a person’s behaviour is based on their national culture. In relation to language learning, the essentialist view has been dominant with national culture being connected to national language learning (Holliday, 2000, p. 1).

Within a non-essentialist view, culture is seen as a flexible concept utilised to suit different functions within identity, politics and science (Holliday, 2000, p. 1). A non-essentialist view allows for analysis of relationships between people, in which the world is made up of countless human groupings which can be seen as ‘small cultures’ (Holliday, 2000, p. 2). Culture from a non-essentialist perspective refers to culture as dynamic and changing, meaning people can belong to more than one culture. In addition, culture is seen as not inherited but rather something which is created. In this way, culture can be seen as a device

to enable ethnography (Holliday, 2000, p. 3). Additionally, the view provides a framework of analysis of behaviour (Holliday, 2000, p. 4).

Holliday (2000) presents an example of how these views can be seen in a classroom setting. The example entails analysing a conflict between teacher and pupil expectations. Through an essentialist view, one must start by acknowledging the cultural difference between the teacher and pupil. Following this, the teacher's and pupils' cultures are analysed connected to national cultural characteristics and result in categorisation (Holliday, 2000, p. 2). Contrary to this, the non-essentialist view highlights culture as a tool for analysing and understanding social behaviour without employing pre-conceptions on cultural characteristics. Therefore, one would analyse through perceiving the classroom as a 'small culture' and investigate the culture and what lead up to the conflict. Instead of analysing the conflict through pre-defined national cultures, one would investigate the teacher's and pupil's orientations through an ethnographic analysis (Holliday, 2000, p. 3). In the context of language learning, an essentialist view might entail pupils' understandings of culture through categorisations to one's country and religion, while pupils' reflections on culture as 'small cultures' could be evidence to a non-essentialist view.

## **2.2 The cultural dimensions of language study**

In the last twenty years, advancements within cognitive sciences, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology have resulted in new understandings of the relationship between teaching a language and culture (Kramsch, 2015, p. 408). Kramsch (2006) describes two different ways of understanding culture within language study, namely the modernist and post-modernist perspectives. Both perspectives are dominant in language learning today. From the modernist perspective, the term culture is connected to the context of language use of native speakers, who are seen as a homogenised national community. In this perspective, culture is either seen as a humanistic (big C culture) or as a sociolinguistic (little c culture) concept (p. 12). This contrasts with the post-modernist perspective, which highlights discourse, identity, and power as key concepts.

### **2.2.1 Culture as a humanistic and sociolinguistic concept**

In a humanistic concept, culture emerges as a product intertwined with the principles of print literacy within educational settings. Culture is linked to general knowledge encompassing literacy and the arts. In this concept, culture is known as big C culture and is connected to the cultivated middle class, because big C culture was a resource when building the nation-state during the 19th century (Meadows, 2016). Big C culture has been encouraged through the nation-state and school systems. In relation to language learning, big C culture is taught by using the national language and is connected to topics within the nation's history, arts, and literature. This results in a national community that provides value and meaning (Kramersch, 2006, p. 13).

The term sociolinguistics refers to a range of studies related to language and society (Labov, 2006, p. 1). Simply put, it is a field that concerns with how social factors impacts people's language use. The sociolinguistic concept of culture, also known as little c culture, is the most used concept of culture in language teaching since the 1980s, due to the emergence of communicative language teaching, focusing on interaction in social contexts. Holiday (1999) defines little c culture as 'small cultures' of everyday life, which entails the native speaker's ways of being (Kramersch, 2006, p. 13). In the 1960s, creating a strong distinction between big C and little c culture was central, with some theorists advocating the usage of little c culture in teaching (Meadows, 2016, p. 151). However, it was not until the 1980s that the usage of language with sociolinguistic appropriateness and cross-cultural pragmatics in authentic cultural contexts received extensive attention. Before that culture was taught through rules of sociolinguistic use which aligned with the teaching methods used in grammar (Kramersch, 2006, p. 13). Prior to the 1980s, culture primarily centred around the native speaker's use of language in the everyday life, with a significant emphasis on defining the identity of a nation. Teaching culture meant teaching the culture the majority of the people in a country had, which in some cases resulted in stereotyping (Kramersch, 2006, p. 14). In relation to foreign language teaching, teaching little c culture entailed employing culture as practical knowledge, meaning pupils gain communication and culture knowledge in relation to being tourists (Kramersch, 2006, p. 14).

### 2.2.2 The post-modernist perspective

Kramsch (2006) highlights how learning English as a second language (ESL) is viewed upon in the post-modernist concept. This perspective perceives the modernist perspective as a limitation when learning ESL. Kramsch (2006) emphasised teaching English as the “language of immigration, global employment, and global transaction” (p. 16) differs from traditional language teaching. Therefore, culture in the teaching of English has been redefined as a post-modernist concept. (Kramsch, 2006, p. 16). Discourse, identity, and power are central elements that define the post-modernist perspective (Kramsch, 2006, p. 16).

Regarding discourse, the post-modernist perspective differs from the modernist perspective by foregrounding the relationship between culture and discourse. Gee (2015) defines discourse into two categories, little-d and big-D discourse. Little-d discourse is any way of using a language (Gee, 1990, in Gee, 2015, p. 2). In this perspective, discourse is referred to as big-D discourse, that is, encompassing both language use and way of being, which facilitates people interactions and the acknowledgment of “socially significant identities” (Gee, 2015, p. 2). Contrary to the modernist perspective, culture in this view is tightly linked to language and thoughts. Culture as discourse introduces the importance language has to history and how history is constantly renegotiated through language. Additionally, it connects a person’s culture in a community to their political identity (Kramsch, 2006, p. 17).

Another key element in the post-modernist perspective is identity. Norton (1997) refers to identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Contrary to Kramsch’s (1998) definition of culture presented previously, Norton (1997) highlights individuality rather than the collective. Changing the focus from culture to identity in teaching may result in pupils acknowledging more responsibility in their learning (Kramsch, 2006, p. 17). In alignment with Norton (1997), Atkinson (1999) proposed six principles of a revised view of culture that can inform Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field:

- Individuality is cultural
- Social group membership and identity are multiple, contradictory, and dynamic

- Social group membership is consequential
- Methods of studying cultural knowledge and behaviour are unlikely to fit a positivist paradigm
- Language (language and teaching) and culture are mutually implicated, but culture is multiple and complex (Atkinson, 1997)

Atkinson (1997) created these principles after observing the absence of culture in the TESOL field (p. 625). The six principles present the clear connection individuality has to culture. Kramersch (2006) underlines how this view of culture presents the dominant view of many teachers of English around the world, with teachers viewing English as a multinational and culture-free language. Additionally, the fear of culture becoming political through stereotyping individually and essentialising national characters is a concern within this view (Kramersch, 2006, p. 18).

Culture as power in the post-modernist perspective relates to the principle of equal worth, maintaining that everyone has the moral right to be heard and listened to. However, the principle is not implemented in practice. Taylor (1994, in Kramersch, 2006) uses the term 'culture wars' to describe the conflict between different cultures' social and moral values. As such, the principle of equal worth refers to the moral and ideological struggle between different cultures. Language teaching and power as a culture are highly linked together (Luke, 1996, in Kramersch, 2006). However, within TESOL a challenge that arises when teaching culture is the political positions of the teacher, as teaching moral differences without disregarding the different views people have can be challenging (Kramersch, 2006, p. 19).

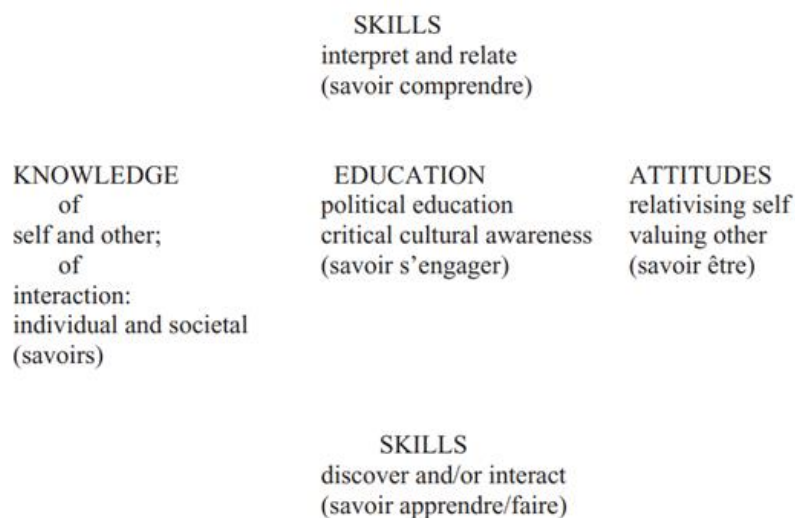
Although the post-modernist view of culture is popular in TESOL, it has not replaced modernist views of culture (Kramersch, 2015, p. 409). In language teaching, modernist views can be recognised in textbooks, movies, and novels, and Kramersch (2015) shows how these views are reproduced by highlighting stereotypes and brand logos (p. 409).



### **2.2.3 Intercultural competence**

In addition to investigating pupils understanding of the concept of culture, the study explores the close connection between the concept of culture and intercultural competence. Simply put, intercultural competence is “the ability to understand and respect each other across all types of cultural barriers” (Council of Europe, 2023a). The Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR) is a tool implemented in the Norwegian education system. Moreover, CEFR has been influenced by theorists within the intercultural field (Byram, 2021, p. 34). CEFR seeks to “protect linguistic and cultural diversity, promote plurilingual and intercultural education, reinforce the right to quality education for all, and enhance intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and democracy” (Council of Europe, 2023b). Byram (2021) introduced the concept of ‘intercultural speaker’ which emphasises the ability to engage and accept diverse perspectives in intercultural communication (p. 43). The components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills, and attitudes aligned with values one holds within one’s social groups, additionally, values in relation to one belonging to a society (Byram, 2021, p. 43). Furthermore, in the late 1990s, Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Competence model (1997) dominated across European schooling systems (Meadows, 2016, p. 157).

**Figure 1.** Dimensions in Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 2021, p. 44).



Building on these components, Byram’s Intercultural Communicative model (1997) consists of five *savoirs*; Intercultural attitudes, Knowledge, Skills of interpreting and relating, Skills of discovery and interaction, and in the centre of the model: Critical cultural awareness, being the fifth *savoir* (see Figure 1). Intercultural attitudes imply understanding the people who are distinguished as different in respect of the cultural meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours (Byram, 2021, p. 44). The second *savoir* refers to the knowledge people bring when communicating with people from their own or other countries. This knowledge is split into two categories, knowledge that is present, however may be refined, and knowledge on concepts and the process of interactions which Byram (2021) highlights “is fundamental to successful interaction however is not acquired automatically” (p. 46). The *savoir* Skills of interpreting and relating relies on the pre-existing information about one's own environment which contributes the ability to interpret a ‘document’ from another country and identify relationships between documents from different countries (Byram, 2021, p. 48). Skills of discovery and interaction focuses on gaining competence as well as acknowledging the understanding of meaning, beliefs, values and behaviours in either documents or interactions (Byram, 2021, p. 49). The centre of the model, Critical cultural awareness is the ability to evaluate both critically and with explicit criteria, perspectives, implementations, and products in other cultures and countries, and one’s own (Byram, et al., 2001, p. 7). This model provides the foundation of what intercultural competence entails and views language learning as a communicative, interactive and a meaningful process (Hoff, 2014, p. 511).

## 2.3 What is critical literacy?

In this section, the background of critical literacy, different definitions and key principles are introduced. Before defining critical literacy, it is necessary to define the terms critical and literacy separately, as there is a difference between critical literacy and critical pedagogy. The term critical stems from the Greek adjective *kriticos*, meaning the ability to argue and judge (Luke, 2012, p. 5). The term literacy is the readings and writings of a text. Critical literacy is an expansion of Freire's approach to literacy in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, with critical literacy having more universal terms to address an extensive variety of social and political situations (Endres, 2001, p. 402). Critical literacy can be defined as an ideological critique of how the world is represented in media, literature, textbooks, and functional texts (Shor & Freire, 1987, in Luke, 2012, p. 7).

In the field of critical literacy, Paulo Freire is one of the most known critical educators of the twentieth century, with Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* viewed as one of the most influential texts of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010, p. 715). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1993, in Endres, 2001, p. 401) reported the impact that literacy education can have in perpetuating oppression. Freire (1970, in Giroux, 2010) viewed pedagogy as a political and moral practice that gives learners knowledge, skills, and social relations so they can become critical citizens in a democratic society (p. 716). In relation to schooling, Freire (1970/2011) introduced the term banking model of education referring to "the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits" (p. 72). Within this model of education, he referred to the teacher as the depositor and the pupils as depositories. In other words, the banking model consists of teachers and pupils not being equal, but rather opposites, meaning the teacher is knowledgeable and the pupils are not. The pupils should listen to the teacher, and they never discover they can educate the teacher (Freire, 2011, p. 72). As a response to this, Freire (1970/2011) proposed the problem-posing model of education which entails acknowledging and addressing the inherent contradiction between the roles of teacher and pupils at the beginning of the educational process (p. 79). Problem posing education breaks the vertical patterns characteristics of banking education. The function of problem posing is the "practice of freedom" which can fulfil its function when contradiction is overcome (Freire, 2011, p. 80). Luke (2012) expresses that the dialogical approach to literacy is based on the principles of reciprocal exchange. The principle

can for example be implemented through cultural critical literacies with a focus on naming and renaming to frame real-life problems (p. 5).

The critical methods of education signify a shift from a focus on specific political dilemmas to fostering critical awareness, enabling political transformation. Giroux & McLaren (1989, in Endres, 2001) highlights how critical education theory starts with the belief that schools are the organisational area for knowledge, power, and the desire to expand “individual capacities and social possibilities” (p. 401). It is vital to acknowledge that critical theories do not see themselves as neutral, they believe through critiquing, analysing and problem posing, learners can understand the cultural and political perspective of all knowledge (Endres, 2001, p. 403).

As presented above, critical literacy is based on Freire’s (1970) critical pedagogy. However, critical literacy has been defined and redefined by many theorists throughout the years (Lewison et al., 2002 p. 382). Luke (2004, in Luke, 2012), for example, refers to critical literacy as the “use of the technologies of print and other media of communication to analyse, critique and transform the norms, rule system and practices governing the social fields of everyday life” (p. 5). Bishop (2014) shares a similar view to critical literacy; she describes critical literacy as:

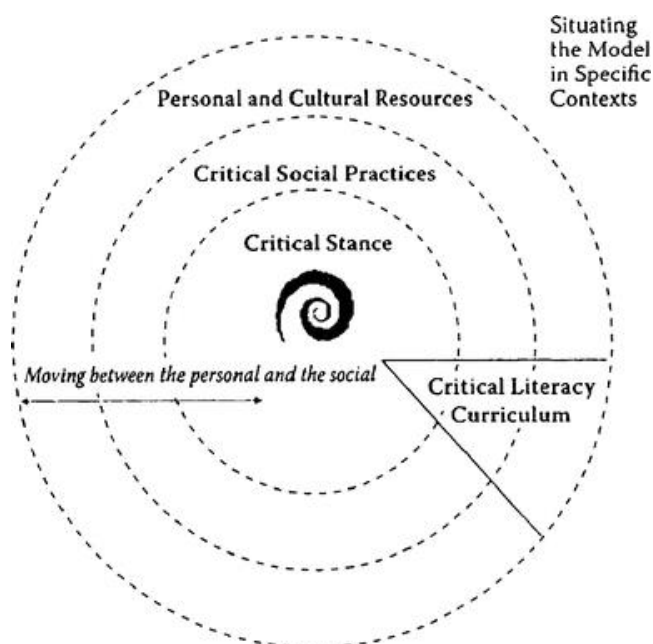
Using texts and print skills in ways that enable students to examine the politics of daily life within contemporary society with a view to understanding what it means to locate and actively seek out contradictions within modes of life, theories, and substantive intellectual positions (Bishop, 2014, p. 51).

Janks (2017) describes critical literacy as a socio-cultural orientation to literacy that is more than the definition of texts and practices, but rather focuses on the social and material effects (p. 1). The common denominator with these definitions is that they describe critical literacy as using different literacy practices to examine or analyse politics and practices of daily life. For the current study, critical literacy is understood as the examining of the social and cultural aspects surrounding the creation and interpretation of texts. It is noteworthy to mention that in this study, critical literacy is mostly emphasised through the implementation of critical literacy practises, with the instructional model of critical literacy by Lewison et al. (2015) being in focus.

Throughout the years, theorists in the critical literacy field have created several frameworks that describe the importance of critical literacy and what critical literacy entail, e.g., Luke and Freedody's (1997) four-resource model, Shannon's (1995) critical literacy framework, Janks's (2010) synthesis model, and Lewison et al. (2002) the four dimensions of critical literacy. When investigating through a classroom lens, teachers and researchers can use these models as a resource in classroom practices, as these frameworks all provide vital approaches to understanding critical literacy in practice. However, Lewison et al. (2015) argue that none of these models is adequate in representing the complexity of implementing critical literacy in elementary and middle school classrooms (p. xxvii).

## **2.4 An instructional model of critical literacy**

In response to this, Lewison et al. (2015) created an instructional model of critical literacy. The model presents critical literacy instruction as a transaction between the personal and cultural resources people use, the critical social practices people ensure, and the critical stance that teachers and pupils employ in the classroom and in the world (Figure 2). Due to the multi-layered nature of the model, the model can be used as a planning tool as well as a resource for teachers to use when observing their lessons (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 5). The instructional model of critical literacy is central to this study as it was used in the planning of the intervention and will thus be explained in detail below.



**Figure 2.** The instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2015 p. 6)

### **2.4.1 Personal and cultural resources**

The model consists of three circles, of which the outer ring is called personal and cultural resources. Here teachers and pupils create the content of the lesson. This can include personal experiences, social issue books, digital tools, textbooks, oral texts, pupils' interests, communities, and international issues. The list provided above is examples as resources in this circle are limitless (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 7).

### **2.4.2 Critical social practices**

The middle ring of the model is called critical social practices and entails the pupils and teachers participating in explicit social practices when creating critical curricula. When teachers choose to use critical social practices, teachers allow pupils to increase their understanding of how social and cultural factors influence their lives. In the past three decades, Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys (2002) analysed several definitions of critical literacy. Based on this, they created four interrelated dimensions of critical social practice:

- Disrupting the commonplace

- Interrogating multiple perspectives
- Focusing on socio-political issues
- Taking action and promoting social justice.

#### **2.4.2.1 Disrupting the commonplace**

In disrupting the commonplace, maintaining a critical perspective is crucial for examining everyday habits, beliefs, and theories about the world. Having a critical viewpoint involves utilising new modes of perception and comprehension to understand experiences. Shannon (1995) and Janks (2012) highlight the development of a language of critique, that is, through language, learners can disrupt implicit modes of identity and belief (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 8). When teachers develop the language of critique (Shannon, 1995), the potential of developing an activist perspective toward their duties and roles emerges (Lewison et al., 2002 p. 383). This is in line with Freire's (1970) problem-posing model of education, which includes classroom engagements that are established from pupils' lives and interests. This model encourages teachers to raise questions connected to the classroom environment (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 9).

Critical literacy in this dimension includes several factors. Firstly, it aligns a manner of interrogating texts by seeking analytical questions, studying the language itself, then analysing how language affects identity and society (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 8). Additionally, popular culture and media are a part of the curriculum for enjoyment and for analysis of how social norms are connected to how individuals and groups are portrayed and constructed in the media (Marsh, 2000; Shannon, 1995; Vasquez, 2000, in Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). Ultimately, in this model teachers and pupils create the curriculum together, where pupils have a central role in planning, gathering resources, and evaluating learning, resulting in everyday situations and popular culture becoming topics within the subject (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 9).

#### **2.4.2.2 Interrogating multiple perspectives**

In interrogating multiple perspectives, pupils reflect on alternative perspectives by standing in the shoes of others. Pupils acknowledging different points of view is essential in this

dimension. Additionally, it is important to underline that no texts are neutral, signifying texts are socially constructed, and all texts can be assessed from different perspectives (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 72). To gain an understanding of a topic, pupils need to be presented with several different perspectives. For example, using literature written from a minority perspective in the classroom allows pupils to criticise historical and cultural events presented in textbooks, providing an opportunity for individuals to share their personal experiences. Using critical literacy practices in the classroom contributes to pupils reflecting on different narratives associated with social and political realities in the everyday world. By providing pupils the opportunity to learn about multiple perspectives and realities, it results in an increase in their knowledge of culture and diversity (Harste et al., 2000, Lewison et al., 2015, p. 10).

### **2.4.2.3 Focusing on socio-political issues**

In language teaching, focusing on socio-political issues involves the act of questioning forms of oppression that are seemingly accepted in society, investigating the relationships between power and language (Anderson & Irvine, 1993) and utilising public debates as an activity to interest pupils in current political affairs (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11).

Critical literacy researchers argue that teaching, as a social practice, is not neutral and that there is insufficient emphasis on acknowledging the presence of socio-political systems and power dynamic in all learning situations (Edelsky, 1999; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993, in Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11). In language study, Janks (2010, in Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11) highlights interconnected notions of domination, access, diversity, and design. Studying how a language works is a resource for understanding and re-establishing the relationship power and language have. Adopting a critical literacy perspective involves analysing how language is employed to maintain power, recognising the ability of minority groups to utilise dominant forms of language while still preserving the significance of their language and culture (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11). Moreover, it investigates the utilisation of cultural resources, such as diverse language structures and the potential of social action to transform discourses within society (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11).



#### **2.4.2.4 Taking action and promoting social justice**

In the dimension, taking action and promoting social justice, pupils use language to make a difference in society. Freire (1970, in Lewison et al., 2015, p. 12) emphasises the crucial role of praxis-reflection and action to change the world. Before pupils actively participate in promoting social change, it is essential for them to comprehend and examine their own narratives and counternarratives. To achieve this objective, pupils engage in various activities such as creating posters, writing letters, essays, reports, and developing websites (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 12). Implementing social issues books allow teachers and pupils to actively participate in texts (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 384). Furthermore, to achieve social justice, pupils need to criticise and redefine ‘cultural borders’. For pupils to understand others they need to be ‘border crossers’ and use a varied of cultural resources to create new ‘borderlands’ (Giroux, 1993, in Lewison et al., 2002 p. 384). By employing this dimension, pupils use cultural resources and critical literacy to speak up and make a difference in society (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 12).

#### **2.4.3 Critical stance**

The core of the model is taking a critical stance, which entail addressing teachers’ and pupils’ way of thinking. A critical stance is the attitudes and dispositions people engage in to become critically literate beings. Lewison et al., (2015) describe four dimensions of implementing a critical stance: Consciously engaging, entertaining alternate ways of being, taking responsibility to inquire, and being reflexive (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 13).

##### **2.4.3.1 Consciously engaging**

The first aspect of taking a critical stance is conscious engagement, meaning employing critical thinking to decide how to respond to a situation. Freire (1970, in Lewison et al., 2015) describes this process as naming: “to exist humanly is to name the world to change it” (p. 15). Naming is “thoughts that are outside of the commonplace notions of what is natural” (Wink, 2000, in Lewison et al., 2015, p. 15). It is important to emphasise that naming takes place in communication with others and is difficult as Lakoff (2004, in Lewison et al., 2015) reported

“humans think using unconscious frames” (p. 15). Lakoff (2004, in Lewison et al., 2015) underlines how different groups of people understand the same situations differently due to framing. Additionally, he highlights how reframing, which is revisiting the situation and changing one’s response, is social change (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 15). As such, conscious engagement is achieved through the awareness of available choices for interpretation, response, and action.

#### **2.4.3.2 Entertaining alternate ways of being**

The second aspect of adopting a critical stance involves entertaining alternate ways of being which entail the utilisation and creation of new discourses (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 15). Risk taking supports a critical stance; however, this dimension also involves acknowledging that methods within teaching, learning, and curricula may sometimes not work (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 16). Tension in a classroom setting should be seen as a resource that may result in employing a critical stance. Furthermore, another factor within entertaining alternate ways of being is the conception of the relationship between power and the multimodal being of literacies (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 16).

#### **2.4.3.3 Taking responsibility to inquire**

In relation to the third aspect of critical stance, taking responsibility to inquire, Lewison et al., (2015) present three concepts, namely, inquiry, interrogation, and investigation. Simply put, this critical stance involves pupils asking questions which result in making a change, questioning life, and viewing learning as dynamic. Peirce (1931, in Lewison et al., 2015) emphasises that “knowledge is beliefs at rest” (p. 17), meaning when employing an inquiry stance, one expresses their beliefs and participate in a sequence of actions, where new knowledge and new questions are integrated and investigated. One of the challenges in the curriculum lies in enabling pupils to actively engage in their own language learning. Instead of perceiving knowledge as something to be passively acquired, pupils should be encouraged to actively participate and contribute their own perspectives, which are relevant to real-life conflicts (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, in Lewison et al., 2015, p. 17).

#### **2.4.3.4 Being reflexive**

The last aspect of taking a critical stance is being reflexive. Reflexivity is understanding the duty one has to the system of injustice (Lewison et al., 2015, p.18). In practice, one may want social change, however, that involves preserving oppression. Pennycook (1999, 331, in Lewison et al., 2015) advises questioning “to what extent does critical literacy constantly question common assumptions, including its own” (p. 18). Pennycook (1999, in Lewison et al., 2015,) highlights how critical literacy methods should be seen as “always being in flux” (p. 18), which includes questioning, challenging the given, and acknowledging the limitations within ones knowing and implementing other schemas of politicisation.

Moreover, reflexivity can also be seen as renaming or retheorizing. Naming and renaming are social actions that entail conversations with others, which results in outgrowing oneself (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 18). The renaming cycle is retheorizing norms one has of the world and questioning whether one should change one’s beliefs and understandings (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 18). Hooks (1994, in Lewison et al., 2015) introduces “theory as intervention, as a way to challenge the status quo” (p. 19). In alignment with Hooks (1994) is Freire’s praxis, which is exploring the actions of what one now believes. To adopt a critical stand in this aspect, therefore, means engaging, questioning, and evaluating critical practices (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 18).

#### **2.4.4 Concluding notes**

To summarise, teachers and researchers can utilise the instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2015) both as a planning tool and as a framework for examining teaching practices (p. 5). However, it is important to acknowledge that simply reading a picture book does not fully enact a critical curriculum. Active involvement in critical social practices and maintaining a critical stance are necessary for achieving critical literacy instruction. By employing the instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2015), teachers and researchers can effectively implement critical literacies in the classroom (p. 5). In this study’s context, the utilisation of this model offers a comprehensive approach to teaching and exploring the concept of culture.

## 2.5 Critical literacy and culture views in the current study

The current study positions itself with several views of culture. Culture is seen as something fluid, dynamic, and diverse, thus the study situates itself with a non-essentialist view of culture. By emphasising the social issue book “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017), the intervention utilised diverse everyday texts to engage pupils with their daily lives. This view of culture can be referred to as little c culture and views culture as ‘small cultures’ of everyday life, which entails the native speaker’s ways of being (Kramersch, 2006, p. 13). Additionally, the intervention highlighted the post-modernist perspective of culture, which is embraced by many English teachers globally (Kramersch, 2006, p. 18). Furthermore, in line with the LK20 curriculum, the intervention emphasised intercultural competence, aiming to develop pupils’ ability to communicate, understand and accept diverse perspectives and perceptions of the world (Byram, 2021, p. 43). It is worth mentioning that the aim of the pupils becoming ‘intercultural speakers’ is an ongoing and never-ending process, as they can always develop their intercultural competence further.

Although one may argue that education is about preserving culture, Vasquez et al., (2013) highlight how education has always been associated to changing culture (p. 6). According to their perspective, by engaging in critical practices collaboratively, teacher and pupils can actively shape social practices within classrooms, acknowledging the natural change and evolution of culture (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 6). Vasquez et al. (2013) presents culture as changing which aligns with the non-essentialist view of culture and was a significant aspect of the intervention. Thus, this demonstrates how critical literacy practices can effectively support the implementation of the non-essentialist view of culture within the classroom.

In the current study, the critical literacy approach highlighted is Lewison et al, (2015) understandings of critical literacy. As previously mentioned, they argue that other critical literacy models are insufficient in representing the complexity of what it means to implement critical literacy practices in primary school classrooms. Given that this study investigates year 5 EFL pupils understandings of the concept of culture before and after a critical literacy project, the intervention was designed with the use of the instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2015) to present critical literacy practices in the classroom.

### **3. Previous research**

The following chapter will provide an overview of relevant studies to this thesis. To the best of the author's knowledge, pupils' understanding of the concept of culture with the use of critical literacy has not been researched. Hence, the previous research chapter is divided into two categories: culture in the classroom and critical literacy in the classroom.

#### **3.1 Culture in the classroom**

In the field of teaching culture in the classroom there are, to the best of author's knowledge, no previous studies on pupils' perception of the concept of culture. However, there are studies investigating on student teachers understanding of the concept of culture (e.g., Drewelow, 2012; Lotveit & Bugge 2020). Additionally, there have been previous studies investigating teachers' perspectives, focusing on their practices and attitudes toward culture (e.g., Alvares & Bonilla, 2009; Anedreassen, 2014; Bandura & Sercu, 2005; Bayyurt, 2006; Gomez, 2015; Listuen, 2017; Yesil & Bemiroz, 2017). Many of these had a strong focus on intercultural competence (Alvares & Bonilla, 2009; Anedreassen, 2014; Bandura & Sercu, 2005; Gomez, 2015; Listuen, 2017). The previous research discussed below is relevant to this thesis, as investigating student and teachers' views on culture is crucial due to the potential influence of teachers' perspectives on pupils.

Drewelow (2012) investigated students' perceptions of culture in a first-trimester course in French. The participants consisted of twenty-two college students from an American university as well as the instructors of the course. The data was collected through three sections of individual online chat sessions during the course (Drewelow, 2012, p. 287). The study revealed that the students perceived that the French course mainly focused on language acquisition (Drewelow, 2012 p. 290). However, all the students reported learning culture through cultural facts or products from their textbook and personal experiences from their instructors. For most of the participants the culture gained from the class focused on two aspects: (a) facts and products of the target culture, and (b) similarities and differences between the native and target culture (Drewelow, 2012, p. 291). Two participants in the study expressed the difficulty in defining culture and the connection culture has to the French

course, although throughout the study, one participant reflected on how language offered a better understanding of culture (Drewelow, 2012, p. 293).

Additionally, Drewelow's (2012) study reported occasions where the students recognised and did not recognise culture in the teaching. The participant recognised the importance of cultural knowledge in language acquisition, in relation to the distinction between "vous" and "tu" as formal and informal, wherein the incorrect usage may be deemed offensive (Drewelow, 2012, p. 295). On the other hand, a material mentioned in the interviews was a film about a French rapper, which from the instructor perspective was utilised to highlight the concern of racism in France, was seen "as a joke" from one participant. Drewelow (2012) suggests that the instructor's intention on representing racism in France was not recognised as the video represented a perspective and not facts (p. 295).

In a Norwegian setting, Løtveit & Bugge (2020) conducted a study to investigate the objects or entities that student teachers prioritise as "proprietors" of culture(s), as well as the degree to which students' teacher interpretations of the concept of culture reflect its dynamic nature, including the possibility of cultural change. Through a combination of a quantitative and qualitative analysis, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to student teachers in their first (2014) and third (2017) year of teacher education. In relation to "proprietors" of culture(s) the researcher found the teacher students' understandings as highly varied, with some focusing on "humans", others on "people(s)". In addition to some instances of the use of "us" and "others", Løtveit & Bugge (2020) underline the tendency the student teachers had when describing culture as "something close to themselves" indicating that culture appears as something personal and tightly related to the respondents' local environment and network (p. 32). Moreover, the study reports evidence of teacher education to some degree increasing the student teachers' competence to view culture as a general phenomenon, as it was more frequent to combine personal pronouns with general terms (Løtveit & Bugge, 2020, p. 33). In relation to the student teachers defining culture as dynamic, it was hardly evident in 2014, while in 2017 the student teachers provided explicit examples such as, "culture is a set of values, norms, traditions that is continually changing" (Løtveit & Bugge, 2020, p. 34).

Bandura & Sercu's (2005) quantitative study explored teachers' attitudes to the cultural dimension of language teaching. Their goal was to describe an average profile for foreign language teachers and the study therefore included seven countries. Survey data was collected from 345 teachers. The study found that traditional teaching methods were less popular, and the teachers often express their knowledge and views instead of allowing and encouraging pupils to be a part of their learning. In other words, teacher-centred approaches were more used than pupil-centred approaches. Teaching little c culture was favoured by teachers in all countries, and themes such as daily life routines and youth culture were deemed relevant. International relations, which can be seen in relation to the essentialist view of culture, was not prioritised in teaching, with some teachers not implementing it at all (Bandura & Sercu, 2005, p. 86).

Bayyurt (2006) and Yesil & Bemiroz (2017) used interviews to investigate Turkish teachers' perceptions and opinions about culture in the FL study. They focused on how Turkish English teachers define the concept of 'culture' in an EFL context. In Bayyurt's (2006) study, the teachers defined culture as "the lifestyle, gastronomy, traditions, etiquette, history, belief and value systems, and language of a group of people living in a city, country" (p. 238). Regarding culture and linguistics issues in the EFL classroom, they believed it was an advantage being a non-native English teacher. Furthermore, they did not express a view on whether culture should be a part of the English curriculum, however, they all addressed cultural topics in the EFL classroom (Bayyurt, 2006, p. 244).

Yesil & Bemiroz's (2017) interviewees shared a similar understanding of culture to that found in Bayyurt (2006). They defined culture as "a list of features related to the term culture" i.e., eating habits, arts, customs, and behaviours, values, and attitudes. Moreover, they expressed the difficulty in defining culture (Yesil & Bemiroz, 2017, p. 87). In addition, the teachers all agreed that culture should be taught in English lessons and that including cultural elements in the classroom had positive and motivating impacts on pupils' proficiency level of English (Yesil & Bemiroz, 2017, p. 88).

In a Norwegian context, Listuen (2017) researched the characterisation of teaching culture in the English subject in two lower-secondary classes. To gather the data, Listuen (2017) used interviews and analysis of video-taped English lessons. Her findings revealed that teaching culture focused on culture as a humanistic concept, or big C culture, due to themes being historical. The teacher mostly used authentic materials when teaching historical topics. Additionally, the authentic materials were connected to intellectual challenge for the pupils and classroom discourse, i.e., teacher responses to pupils' ideas. In this study, an authentic text was defined as "a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (Gilmore, 2007, in Listuen, 2017, p. 31). The teachers' general objective for teaching cultural topics in the English subject was to develop pupils' general knowledge, strengthen communication and pupils' leaning about different ways of living (Listuen, 2017, p. 6).

It is important to acknowledge that some of these previous studies are conducted more than a decade ago, which, due to the changing understandings of culture in language teaching, may influence that validity of the findings for today. Furthermore, only two of the studies presented above was conducted in the Norwegian context, and neither of them included a focus on elementary school pupils' perceptions of culture. Listuen (2017) suggests that it would be interesting if further research in the field of culture and language teaching focused on the pupils' perspective (p. 84). By focusing on how pupils understand the concept of culture both before and after a critical literacy project, the current study will contribute to filling this research gap.

### **3.2 Critical literacy in the classroom**

Bacon (2017) found that studies of critical literacy in English language teaching often focus on outcomes in relation to language learning and critical engagement, and fewer studies focus on outcomes in relation to culture learning, although some exceptions do apply. For example, critical literacy has been studied in relation to religious diversity (Hayik, 2015), stereotypes (Brown, 2020; Huh & Suh, 2015), global awareness (Yoon, 2016). Hayik, (2011) and Hayik (2015) used the four dimensions of critical literacy and picture books in relation to cultural focus. Brown (2020) was conducted in upper secondary while Hayik (2011) and Hayik (2015)



were conducted in lower secondary. Yoon (2016) and Huh & Suh (2015) conducted in primary school classrooms, although Huh & Suh (2015) was conducted in an after-school reading class. Despite the lack of specific research on the concept of culture, the previous studies discussed below hold relevance to this thesis as they offer valuable insights into the utilisation of critical literacy in the classroom for the instruction of cultural themes.

As mentioned, Hayik (2015) focuses on cultural diversity. The study was based on the four dimensions of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2002). By using religion-based literature, Hayik's (2015) aim was to increase students' knowledge of and respect for the other religions in a village in Israel. Since religious diversity issues were absent from textbooks, Hayik (2015) employed multicultural picture books on religious diversity in the classroom (p. 93). The data consisted of videotaped course sessions, pupils' responses to texts and the researchers reflective journal (Hayik, 2015, p. 96). The finding showed that challenging religious problems in the pupils' village were difficult to change. The pupils tried to promote peaceful relationships in the village, however, focused more on general conflicts in the country (Hayik, 2015, p. 104).

Yol and Yoon (2020) researched on how year 6 pupils aged 11/12 responded to critical global literacies. They define critical global literacies as "critical practices that focus on developing pupils' global and multicultural perspectives" (Yol & Yoon, 2020, p. 2). The study had three year 6 participants who were living in New York and participated in ESL lessons. The study consisted of four lessons with a week between each lesson. The data sources included were student interviews, audio recordings, observations, and field logs of the four lessons (Yol & Yoon, 2020, p. 5). The study was based on critical global literacies instructional framework. This consists of (1) developing students' global awareness with the interconnected world concept, (2) making connections from a personal to global level (3) analysing and critiquing texts from global and cross-cultural perspectives and (4) encouraging students to be socially and politically active on global and multicultural issues (Yol & Yoon, 2020, p. 4). Through classroom observations, Yol and Yoon (2020) found that the pupils were actively engaged with global topics, especially their own culture and home country. In addition, the pupils were also responsive and came up with solutions to global and local issues (Yol & Yoon, 2020, p. 8).

As such, while the findings from studies focusing on critical literacy and culture demonstrate potential for understanding topics connected to culture, no studies have looked specifically at how learners' perceptions of culture as a concept might change through a critical literacy intervention. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on critical literacy in Norwegian classrooms overall, and particularly regarding culture. Therefore, this thesis will contribute relevant knowledge to the critical literacy field.

## **4. Methodology**

The methodology chapter is split into five sub-sections and will introduce the methods used in this study. Section 4.1 addresses the methodological approach used. Section 4.2 has two sub-categories: 4.2.1 The sample and 4.2.2 Data collection methods which address the data collection methods reviewed and justified for this study. Moreover, section 4.3 includes a description of how the data was organised and analysed. The trustworthiness of this study will be discussed in section 4.4. Finally, in section 4.5 the ethical consideration taken in this study is addressed.

### **4.1 Methodological approach**

A qualitative research design was chosen to address the research question for the current study, which is:

Do year 5 EFL pupils' understanding of the concept of culture develop through a critical literacy project, and if so in what ways?

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 35) reported that defining qualitative research is difficult as there are no theories, paradigms, methods, or practices that are distinctly its own. Therefore, implementing a qualitative research design can be complicated (Turner, 2010, p. 754). According to Dörnyei (2007) "qualitative analysis involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods" (p. 24). Qualitative analysis involves understanding the participants' perspectives (Turner, 2010, p. 754). Postholm (2010) explains that a qualitative researcher seeks the participants in their daily life and research a topic connected to their theoretical background (p. 17).

The current study employed a qualitative approach, as the goal of this study is to gain a better understanding on how pupils define of the concept of culture, and if a critical literacy project could develop their understandings. By employing a qualitative research approach in this study, the researcher can examine and gain insights into the underlying reasons and processes

behind the pupils' understandings of culture following a critical literacy intervention. This method allows for a more in-depth analysis of the "how" and "why" aspects of the topic, bringing light on the complexities and nuances of the pupils' opinions and experiences. Dörnyei (2007) presents that main goal of qualitative research is not to acquire data that is representative of a large group, but rather pursue to describe peculiar human experiences and understandings of the topic under research (p. 126).

Dörnyei (2007) suggests that qualitative research design has several characterisations, the main being the importance of emergent nature. This refers to the aspect of the study being open and fluid resulting in responses being flexible and allowing new details to be presented during the process of investigation (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). Another characteristic of qualitative research design is that the research process is viewed with an open mind and has no preconceived hypotheses. The research question is flexible, meaning the study may change or evolve (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37). In relation to this study, the researcher attempts to follow these characteristics of a qualitative researcher.

## **4.2 Data collection**

### **4.2.1 The sample**

Dörnyei (2007) highlights that well-conducted qualitative research takes a lot of time, therefore, qualitative studies employ smaller groups of participants rather than quantitative research (p. 38). In this study, the sample was selected from three Year 5 English classes in a Norwegian primary school on the west coast of Norway, with 58 pupils in total. These classes were selected based on of convenience sampling, which according to Dörnyei (2008) is the most common sampling strategy in L2 research. In the case of the current research project, the researcher had access to the three English classes as the researcher is their English teacher, thus making the convenience of the researcher an important criterion (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 98). 35 of the 58 pupils in the three classes consented to participate in the current study. Of these, one group from each class with four to five pupils in each group were selected for interviews using non-probability sampling, that is, the sample being created with the resources one already has (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 97). This sampling strategy is mostly used in research applied to linguistics and is distinguished into three categories: Quota sampling and dimensional

sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience or opportunity sampling (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 98). In this study, the selection of participants was chosen using convenience sampling. Dörnyei (2007) presents that convenience sampling is the most common sampling type in L2 research and refers to an important criterion which is the convenience of the researcher (p. 98). The reasoning behind researching Year 5 pupils is the convenience of researching one's own pupils.

In this study, there were limitations in sampling due to a lack of willingness to participate, particularly in interviews. The criteria of setting groups together were influenced by Dörnyei's (2007) emphasis on gender differences in L2 studies (p. 199). Therefore, the initial plan was to include two boys and two girls in each group to address subgroup variations. However, the criteria were not met due to limitations arising. These limitations resulted in one group consisting of three girls and one boy during the pre-interviews, while two of the groups had five participants during the post-interviews. Despite the limitations arising from group changes due to sickness and other factors, all participants provided consent.

#### **4.2.2 Data collection methods**

In this study, the data collection methods used to gather data are group interviews and an analysis of learner artifacts produced during the intervention. The group interviews were selected to gather pre-and post-data, while the analysis of learner artifacts was conducted to gather information about the process. In the following, the group interviews will be described first, followed by a description of the intervention and the related artifacts.

##### **4.2.2.1 Group interviews**

Employing interviews is the most frequently used method in qualitative research as it is a known communication routine in society that has positive results (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 134). Turner (2010, p. 754) highlights how interviews give in-depth information relating to participants' experiences and viewpoints on a specific topic, which is relevant to this study as it investigated pupils' views on the concept of culture. Group interviews are a research technique that takes the benefit of group dynamics to supply new and extra data (Frey & Fontana, 1991, p. 183). When researching young learners there are both advantages and limitations to utilising group interviews (Lewis, 1992, in Punch, 2000, p. 47). One advantage

is that group interviews decrease chances of issues arising due to the unequal power relationship between the researcher and interviewee, which is relevant for the current study since the interviewees are Year 5 pupils. For this reason, in addition to drawing on the benefits of group dynamics to supply more extensive data, group interviews were chosen for the current study. However, a disadvantage with implementing groups interviews is the group dynamics influencing the pupil's negativity. Another challenge associated with group interviews is that pupils may simultaneously interrupt or prevent other pupils from expressing their thoughts.

Within qualitative interview design, there are many different types of interviews (Creswell, 2007, in Turner, 2010, p. 754). The most common interview types are structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). However, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003, in Turner, 2010, p. 754) present three formats to interview design: informal conversation, general interview guide approach, and standardised open-ended interview. The standardised open-ended interviews and the general interview guide approach could be classified as semi-structured interviews in the sense that they include a plan but allow for follow-up questions. However, the difference seems to be in how strictly one adheres to the original question formulations (not the follow-up questions).

In this study, a semi-structured interview approach was utilised, which is widely employed in research studies. This approach participants to provide detailed information while allowing researchers to ask follow-up questions, resulting in the researcher gaining knowledge of the participants' views and experiences (Turner, 2010, p. 756). Spradley (1979) points out that researchers who use a semi-structured interview have the goal to understand the interviewee rather than explain what is being researched, aligning with the qualitative nature of the study (Creswell 1998, in Postholm, 2010, p. 73). Specifically, the present study employed a standardised open-ended interview, consisting of pre-planned open-ended questions that allows room for other questions to arise during the interviewer-interviewee interaction (DiCioo-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). All interviewees are asked the same questions, ensuing comparability between the groups and maintaining consistency between the pre-and post-interviews.

In the current study, audio recordings were implemented during the group interviews. Taking notes is not enough as one is unlikely to be able to catch all details. Additionally, note taking

is also a disruption in the interview process (Dörnyei, 2007, p.139). It is therefore recommended to use technical equipment upon impetration of qualitative interviews because of the importance of having the participants' own statements (Dalen, 2011, p. 28). In this study, the use of voice recording will be necessary for the research, especially when the participants work on the interview tasks. It is essential to point out that recording has a technical and theoretical aspect (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 139). In relation to the technical aspects, this study implemented the Dictaphone app and trial recordings. The researchers can record using the Dictaphone mobile app, then upload the recordings to Nettskejma, which is a web-based survey tool that gathers data and offers security procedures to ensure data accuracy and privacy. Dörnyei (2007) raises concern over the loss of information in audio recording, such as, nonverbal cues, such as eye movement, facial expressions. However, implementing video recordings might be challenging, thus Dörnyei (2007) advises to only utilise video recordings if they are essential to one's research (p. 139). Since using video recordings was not necessary for this study, just audio recordings were utilised.

In the pre-and post-interview, task-based activities were implemented. Researching on young learners is different from adults as they are not as likely to give long answers to open-ended questions (Harden and others, 2000, in Punch, 2000, p. 54). Therefore, the mix of task-based activities alongside general interview questions was chosen to offer variety to engage the pupils, stimulate discussion on a difficult concept, and minimise the unequal power relationship between the researcher and the pupils. Additionally using a range of different techniques can be effective for managing the participants' different abilities and likings (O'Kane, 2000, in Punch, 2002, p. 45).

The first interview task was creating a mind map with the word culture in the middle. This activity functioned as a brainstorming technique and proved to be beneficial as a visual aid addressing the second activity. The second interview task was a ranking exercise. The task is split into two steps, first, the pupils write five words associated with culture on five index cards. Then they discuss and rank the words with one being the word most important to culture and five being the least important word connected to culture. In the appendix (see Appendix 1) the interview tasks are provided in the interview guide. Punch (2002) researched interview strategies with young learners and found that a mix of task-based activities and direct questioning created a relaxed atmosphere which seemed to increase the learner's confidence in participating in interviews (p. 54).

When implementing a semi-structured interview, one needs an interview guide that has been created in advance (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). In this study, an interview guide was produced (see appendix 1) and approved by Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt). Dörnyei (2007) indicates that the purpose of an interview guide is to help the interviewer in many aspects: (a) being certain that all relevant topics are covered, and important aspects are not forgotten by accident; (b) phrasing question wordings that are suitable; and (c) presenting a guide of inquisitive questions, and comments if needed (p. 137). Before conducting the pre-interviews, the interview guide was piloted twice as a mock interview (with a colleague). This was to ensure that the questions are worded in a matter that would result in rich data. The interview guide consists of three sections, the first activity (mind map), the second activity (ranking task), and the interview questions. The task-based activities focused on the general concept of culture, while the interview question was created in a matter to gain a better understanding of pupils' views and knowledge of culture, for example, the question "Do people have different cultures, why, why not?". Moreover, the wording of the questions was designed to stimulate discussion among the participants, questions such as "What is good with culture?" and "What is bad with culture?".

Beforehand the decision of having the interviews in Norwegian was made to minimise the power dynamic. When foreign learners interact with a first language learner, they may find themselves in a weak position, which may result in them feeling a lack of control in understanding (Rolland et. al., 2019, p. 284). Moreover, as the current study investigates Year 5 pupils' views, interviewing in English will result in a language barrier for some of the pupils. However, the participants were allowed to choose whether to answer in English or Norwegian, as the intervention was implemented in the English class. Transcriptions of the interviews were verbatim, meaning they attempted to capture the participants' contributions as accurately as possible, including hesitations, such as pauses and filler words. However, to keep the transcriptions manageable when the participants' conversation went off topic it was not transcribed but rather stated in parentheses.

The interviews took place in a group room in the participants' school, as a qualitative researcher seeks the participants in their daily life (Postholm, 2010, p. 17). The researcher facilitated the conversation and started by informing the participant of their rights and underlining that it was not an assessment. This was particularly emphasised as the researcher



is also their teacher. After the interview tasks and interview questions, the interview ended by allowing the pupils to share their thoughts on culture and ask if they had anything to add. All the interviews lasted between 15-22 minutes.

#### **4.2.2.2 Intervention & learner artifacts**

The intervention spanned over a four-week period, encompassing a total of eight lessons, with one lesson being 60 minutes, in each class. These lessons were planned by utilising the instructional model of critical literacy from Lewison et al. (2015). To provide a comprehensive overview of the intervention and its relationship to the perspectives on critical literacy and culture, a detailed intervention plan is presented below. Throughout the intervention, the pupils worked with the picture book “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017). “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017) follows a day in the lives of seven children around the world. There are several benefits to implementing picture books as it (a) promotes social qualities such as friendship, teamwork, responsibility, and empathy, and (b) promote communication skills such as active listening, which are fundamental skills for developing cultural competence (Pinter et al., 2017; Kruse, 2001, in Zhang, 2022, p. 2). Within a critical literacy aspect applying a social issue book like “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017) is a beneficial learning tool that allows pupils to actively participate in texts (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 3).

Table 1 presents an overview of the intervention, tasks, and its relationship to the perspectives on critical literacy and culture (for a more detailed illustration of the way the tasks were presented to the pupils, see Appendix 2).

**Table 1.** *Overview of the intervention, tasks and connections to critical literacy and culture*

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Content</b>  | <b>An instructional model of critical literacy</b> (Lewison et al., 2015)  | <b>Connection to culture views</b>              |
|-------------|---|--|---|
| 1           | <p>Create a mind map together “what is culture?”</p> <p><b>Task 1</b></p> <p>Do we all have the same culture in Norway?</p> <p>Read the book “this is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017)</p>   | <p>Resources – Social issue book (picture book), asking pupils about how they define culture.</p> <p>Entertaining alternate ways of being. Disrupting the Commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, Focusing on the Socio-political.</p> | <p>Little c culture</p> <p>Non-essentialist</p> |
| 1           | <p>Summarize the picture book</p> <p><b>Task 2</b></p> <p>One person in each group writes down the answer to, “which culture in the book did we know of, and if so, which culture is more represented in society and why?”</p> <p>Then each group presents their answer.</p>  | <p>Resources – Social issue book (picture book),</p> <p>Entertaining alternate ways of being.</p> <p>Disrupting the Commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints,</p> <p>Focusing on the Socio-political.</p>                                | <p>Post-modernist perspectives</p>              |
| 2           | <p><b>Task 3</b></p> <p>Create your own chapter with a fictional Norwegian character. Write in the first person and draw as well. This will include:</p> <p>This is me.<br/> This is where I live.<br/> This is who I live with.<br/> This is what I wear to school.<br/> This is what I eat for breakfast.<br/> This is how I go to school.<br/> This is how we learn.<br/> This is how we play.<br/> This is how we help.<br/> This is how we eat dinner.<br/> This is where I sleep.</p> | <p>Disrupting the Commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints,</p> <p>Moving between the personal and social</p>  | <p>Little-c culture</p>                         |
| 2           | <p>When finished they will present it, like a book</p>  | <p>Resources – Social issue book</p>   |   |

|          |  |   |  |
|----------|--|---|--|
|          | <b>Task 4</b><br>Find similarities and differences in the Norwegian characters created.  | Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints.  | Little-c culture, non-essentialist                           |
| <b>3</b> | A short summary of the book.<br><b>Task 5</b><br>A written task in groups “Find similarities and differences in the characters” in the book.<br><b>Task 6</b><br>Criticising the picture book “Do all families look like this» | Resources – Social issue book<br>Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints.               | Little-c culture, non-essentialist, intercultural competence |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Task 7</b><br>“Do all the families have the same opportunities?”<br>Pupils go back and reflect at the mind map created. What is culture?  | Focusing on the Socio-political<br>Taking action to promote social justice.       | Post-modernist perspectives, intercultural competence        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Task 8</b><br>Ribaldo from Peru is starting in your class, how can you welcome him and include him in the classroom? Group written task.<br><b>Task 9</b><br>Written task “4 words you connect to culture”.                 | Taking action to promote social justice<br>Moving between the personal and social | Non-essentialist, post-modernist, intercultural competence   |

In addition to the interviews, artifacts were collected from the pupils during the intervention. All artifacts collected in the intervention were produced in groups and are responses to the tasks asked throughout the intervention. These consisted mostly of written texts but also included drawings. Einarsdottir et al., (2009, p. 219) highlight that researchers who investigate children’s thought processes may find that young learners develop a narrative and meaning when participating in drawing activities, and a combination of this narrative can

result in an illustration of their thought processes and awareness. The reason behind using drawing as a method is due to the age and language level of the participants. Year 5 pupils are expected to be at approximately the A2 level in the CEFR common reference table and drawing can therefore function as an activity where everyone can participate regardless of language level (Council of Europe, n.d., b). Additionally, the participant's level of English proficiency level influenced the decision to incorporate group work in this study. In total, artifacts were collected from 7 groups from the nine tasks throughout the intervention, although not all groups completed all tasks. Table 2 presents an overview of which week the texts were collected in and which types of texts it is.

**Table 2.** *Overview of types of texts collected in which week*

| <b>Week</b>        | <b>Type of text</b>                                | <b>Collected</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--------------|
| <b>1. Lesson 1</b> | Task 1: written                                    | Task 1           | 7            |
| <b>1. Lesson 2</b> | Task 2: written                                    | Task 2           | 7            |
| <b>2. Lesson 1</b> | Task 3: written<br>and drawing                     |                  |              |
| <b>2. Lesson 2</b> | Task 3: written<br>and drawings                    | Task 3           | 7            |
| <b>3. Lesson 1</b> | Task 4 and 5:<br>written                           | Task 4           | 7            |
| <b>3. Lesson 2</b> | Task 5 and 6:<br>written                           | Task 5 and 6     | 7            |
| <b>4. Lesson 1</b> | Task 7: written<br>Task 8: written<br>and drawings | Task 7           | 6            |
| <b>4. Lesson 2</b> | Task 8: written<br>and drawings<br>Task 9: written | Task 8 and 9     | 7            |

### **4.3 Data analysis**

To investigate whether pupils' understanding of the concept of culture changed through a critical literacy project, a thematic analysis was implemented to analyse the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Employing a thematic analysis is a common method in qualitative research, however, there is a lack of clearness of what thematic analysis is and how one utilises it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). Therefore, this study took inspiration of Braun &

Clarke’s (2006) six phases of analysis. It is important to emphasise that these phases have a recursive process and are not rules, they are guidelines that needed to be adapted to this study.

The first step in data analysis is to transcribe the recording into text form (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 246). In relation to the thematic analysis, this fall under the first phase, where the researcher familiarises themselves with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The researcher transcribed the audio recordings from the interviews using Microsoft Word. To ensure authenticity during the analysis process and due to time limitations, only excerpts used in the results chapter below were translated to English.

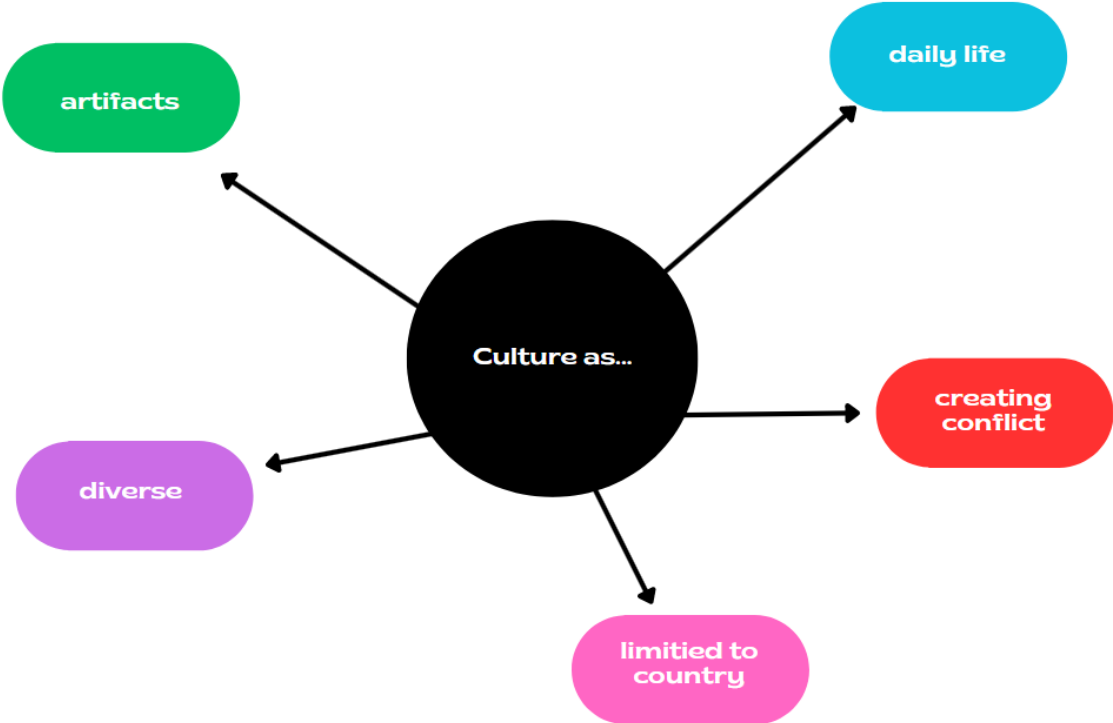
When the transcriptions were finalised, they were imported to Nvivo to organise and analyse the data systematically. In Nvivo the process of coding the data started, referring to the second phase of the thematic analysis. Coding is the process of highlighting excerpts of the transcribed data and labelling these in a way they that can be identified, retrieved, or grouped easily (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 250). In this study, coding was accomplished by marking the different connections the pupils had to culture. The third phase consisted of sorting the codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). In this study, the researcher analysed and considered which codes could be sub-themes and which codes combined could create an overarching theme, however, concluded with only codes and overarching themes, as sub-themes were not necessary. Table 3 presents a visualisation on an example quote, code and overarching theme created in this study.

**Table 3.** *Representation of a quote, code, and overarching theme*

| <b>Quote</b>  | <b>Code</b> | <b>Theme</b>                  |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------|
| “yes, but language, there are lots of different languages in different countries” | Language    | Culture as limited to country |

The fourth phase involves reviewing and redefining chosen themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In this study, the researcher revisited the data to assess the presence of sufficient evidence supporting the identified themes. After reviewing the overarching themes, the researcher created a thematic map to visualise the themes. It is vital to mention that the thematic map changed throughout the process, for example, with ‘Culture as artifacts’ first being a sub-theme in ‘Culture as man-made objects’. When the researcher was satisfied with the thematic map, the fifth phase started. In this phase the researcher defines and refines the themes that will be presented in the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). Braun & Clarke (2006) emphasis that define and refine in this context is “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (p. 92). When the researcher could clearly define what each theme was, the analysis was completed. In this study, a total of five themes were identified. Figure 3, presented below, depicts the finalised thematic map for this study, employing a colour-coded representation that is also used to display the results (chapter 5) in a clear and visually impactful manner.

**Figure 3.** *Illustration of the thematic map colour coded.*



## 4.4 Trustworthiness

Bachman (2004, in Dörnyei, 2007) defines research validity as “the overall quality of the whole research project” (p. 52). To increase the study’s trustworthiness, the researcher took inspiration from Lincoln and Guba’s (1985, in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 57) concepts of trustworthiness. They suggest that there are four components of trustworthiness, namely, (a) credibility i.e., the truth value of a study; (b) transferability i.e., the applicability of the results in other contexts; (c) dependability i.e., the consistency of the finding, and (d) confirmability i.e., the neutrality of the findings (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 57). Table 4 presents an overview of the strategies employed in this study in relation to the four components of trustworthiness.

**Table 4.** *Strategies used to guarantee trustworthiness*

| <b>Criterion</b>       | <b>Strategy employed</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Credibility</b>     | Prolonged engagement     |
|                        | Triangulation            |
|                        | Audio recordings         |
|                        | Data analysis            |
| <b>Transferability</b> | Thick descriptions       |
|                        | Sampling                 |
| <b>Dependability</b>   | Audit trail              |
|                        | Triangulation            |
| <b>Confirmability</b>  | Audit trail              |
|                        | Peer checks              |
|                        | Practice reflexivity     |

Credibility refers to the study’s truth value, and whether the study is credible to both the participants and the readers (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p. 312). In this study the usage of triangulation, prolonged engagement, audio recordings and data analysis increased the study’s credibility. Triangulation was addressed through the pre-, post- interviews and learner artifacts collected from the intervention. Credibility was also increased through audio recordings, as it strengthens transcriptions being verbatim. Additionally, the prolonged engagement was applied as the study consisted over a 4-week period, which resulted in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the participants views. Kleven & Hjardeaal (2018, p. 117) advise how one should always examine different interpretations before

selecting one to focus on. Therefore, to achieve credibility in this study the researcher also analysed several interpretations of the results before presenting the discussion section.

Transferability in this study was addressed through thick descriptions and sampling. Transferability is similar to the concept of generalisability, that is, referring to how findings could be applicable to other, similar, contexts. Although, unlike generalisability, “the responsibility of demonstrating transferability is believed to rest with the one who wishes to apply the results to different situations” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 475). Thick descriptions were presented throughout the study, for example, through a clear explanation of the interview tasks and learner artifacts. Additionally, thick descriptions were also presented in the thematic analysis and results in this study. By examining three Year 5 classes rather than one, the sample size is larger, which relates to transferability and the chances of the results being valid in other situations. Furthermore, the study was also conducted in three intact classrooms working towards goals regarding the national curriculum, which increases the transferability to other classroom contexts within Norway.

Dependability involves ensuring that the study is conducted consistently, preserving stability and reliability, and upholding high quality and integrity standards in both the researchers' activities and the methods used (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p. 312). In the current study, an audit trail and triangulation were the strategies applied to ensure dependability. By employing a systematic approach to the data analysis and the transparentness of the process, dependability and confirmability were addressed. In this current study, triangulation was also ensured by going back and forth between tasks-based activities, interview questions, and the examination of the learner artifacts collect, in order to gain a greater understanding of the participants views.

Confirmability, also known as external reliability in qualitative terminology, refers to ensuring that the study process is unbiased and is free for the researchers' unacknowledged biases or preconceived beliefs (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p. 311). This idea includes recognising and resolving any prejudices that may be present in the study. Simply put, it implies that the researcher is open about potential biases and aiming for equality and



neutrality in research (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p. 311). In the current study, confirmability was seen through audit trail, peer checks and practice reflexivity. In qualitative research, reliability checks completed by peers are a standard routine (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 61). In this study, to receive useful feedback, the interview guide was piloted with classmates. Additionally, themes and results were discussed and revised with the supervisor.

According to Dörnyei (2007, p. 176) “classroom research is a broad umbrella-term for empirical investigations that uses the classroom as the main research site.” (p. 176). As this current study is conducted in the classroom, there are several difficulties and challenges that may arise when implementing classroom research. To reflect upon these challenges the study highlights Dörnyei (2007, p. 188) list which forewarns researchers and reassures them the problems that might occur are not evidence of their inadequacy:

- Meeting different needs and standards
- Fluidity of the student body
- Time-consuming nature
- Working with teachers
- Working with students
- Unexpected events and interruptions
- Obtrusive researcher effect
- Ethical considerations
- Technical difficulties
- Multisite design

Practicing reflexivity was ensured throughout the study by expressing the study’s limitations, for example, the researcher openness about the power position of being the participants’ teacher. Reflexivity was also used to increase trustworthiness and address the lack of controllability within classroom research.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

Billups (2020) describes how ethical considerations in research involve “the individual’s right to understand the boundaries of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, privacy or confidential treatment of their data, and the obligations of the researcher to safeguard their rights and interests” (32). In educational research, the learners’ lives are affected, especially in qualitative research hence ethical issues arise (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 63). Although historically research finds that the participants in educational research, are not subject to any physical harm, ethical principles still need to be followed (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 63). Since the current study handles personal data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings, the data collection and processing are handled according to the rules and regulations for personal data processing set by Sikt. By applying to Sikt, it ensured that the data was collected, adapted, and analysed legally. Until Sikt granted approval, no contact was made with the parents/ guardians and pupils about this study, ensuing macro ethics.

Macro ethics pertains to ethical considerations that encompass larger social concerns and inquiries, extending the individual or personal aspect (De costa et al., 2020, p. 122). Nobody can collect personal data from children without consent from a parent or guardian (Dalen, 2011, p. 31). Therefore, after the Sikt approval (see Appendix 3), both pupils, parents, and guardians were informed and had to consent by signing the consent form (See Appendix 4) before the research started. The consent form was given physically to 58 pupils, although it was 35 pupils whose parents consented to become participants in the study. In the consent form it was pointed out clearly that pupils’ personal information will be confidential, that audio recordings will be used in the interview and stored on Nettskjema and then deleted after the study. Moreover, as this current study researched Year 5 pupils, this also required informing and getting the study approved by the school and teachers.

Ethical consideration can also arise from the power dynamic between the researcher and participants, particularly when the researcher is also their teacher. To address these concerns, micro ethics are employed, which entail context-specific practices to handle ethical dilemmas, rather than relying on a universal approach to ensure ethical conduct (De costa et al., 2020, p. 123). The researcher has a greater power position than the participants (Rolland, et, al., 2019,

282) which increases when researching children (Grover, 2004, in Hunleth, 2011, p. 82). Before the study began it was important to reflect ahead on the power relationships the researcher had, as the researcher was also the participants English teacher. Examples of the unequal power dynamics that may arise in this study are: (a) pupils feeling pressured to consent to the project, and (b) answering questions the way they think the researcher wants them to answer. Consequently, these ethical challenges were considered and reflected upon before the study started, and measures were taken to reduce the chance of them arising. Although the consent form clearly highlighted the voluntary aspect of the study, the researcher also ensured that the pupils were aware, through verbal communication, that they had the choice to decline participation or withdraw without any negatively consequences. To minimise the possibility of the participants answering the ‘right’ answer, before the interviews started it was clearly presented that the researcher was only interested in their thoughts.

Furthermore, to reduce the chances of power dynamics occurring, this study draws inspiration from Christensen and James (2008, in Hunleth, 2011) by adopting a research approach that engages with children rather than focusing solely on them (p. 82). Researching with and for children entails following requirements for childhood research. Pout (2005, in Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p. 500) highlights two requirements when investigating childhood research: (a) children should be studied for and in themselves and not for the understanding from the adult world or the researchers' interests, and (b) researchers should be observant and considerate to the geographical, historical, and social contexts of individual childhoods. This study took inspiration from Gallacher and Gallagher's (2008) by implementing child-friendly methods in the interview and intervention. Gallacher and Gallagher's (2008) highlights how “participation has become both an aim and a tool in an ethical quest towards empowering children” (p. 501). Throughout the study, the pupils participated in child-friendly methods such as drawing and storytelling. Child-friendly methods are designed to make research fun and relevant for children (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p. 501). However, to get sufficient data both participatory methods and child-friendly methods were utilised in this study.

## **5. Results**

In this chapter, the results of the current study will be presented. First the five themes that were identified in the analysis of the pupils' understandings of culture are presented.

Following this, the results from the pre- and post-interviews are compared in order to address whether there was a development of the pupils' understandings of culture as a concept, and if so in what ways. Finally, the results from the analysis of the learner artifacts are presented based on their connection to the overall themes.

### **5.1 Themes**

To ascertain whether and in which ways the pupils' understandings of culture as a concept changed after the critical literacy project, it is first important to establish which understandings of the concept of culture were identified in the materials. To identify this, both the pre- and post-interview transcripts were analysed inductively using thematic analysis. Five overall themes were identified during the analysis of the learners' understanding of the concept of culture, namely 'Culture as artifacts', 'Culture as limited to country', 'Culture as creating conflict', 'Culture as daily life' and 'Culture as diverse'. It is important to note that after quoting the pupils, they will be referred to as P1, P2, P3, and so on, where the "P" represents the "pupil" followed by the corresponding number, indicating each individual pupil. Table 5 presents an overview of the frequency of the thematic coding in both the pre- and post-interviews, outlining the number of occurrences in each theme. In the following, the themes will be presented separately, including more detailed information about the codes within each theme.

**Table 5.** Number of times each theme was coded in the three group interviews, pre- and post-intervention.

| Theme                         | Group 1 |      | Group 2 |      | Group 3 |      | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|-------|
|                               | Pre     | Post | Pre     | Post | Pre     | Post |       |
| Culture as artifacts          | 12      | 15   | 0       | 5    | 13      | 28   | 73    |
| Culture as limited to country | 7       | 19   | 5       | 29   | 2       | 26   | 88    |
| Culture as creating conflict  | 13      | 30   | 11      | 8    | 8       | 32   | 102   |
| Culture as daily life         | 17      | 34   | 4       | 28   | 7       | 31   | 121   |
| Culture as diverse            | 4       | 21   | 11      | 28   | 7       | 23   | 94    |

### 5.1.1 Culture as artifacts

The theme ‘Culture as artifacts’ encompasses statements that indicate pupils’ understandings of the culture as man-made objects. This theme was the least frequent theme coded in this study. The theme consists of the code's *buildings*, *art*, *clothes*, *weapons* and *entertainment* and was identified in all groups in the pre- and post-interviews. However, the groups had a slightly different focus regarding the type of *artifacts* they associate with culture. The different associations the groups illustrated will be presented below.

The two codes *Buildings* and *art* were frequent codes in groups 1 and 3 in the pre-interviews. For instance, group 1 wrote both buildings and art on the ranking task, connecting these to culture through arguments such as “maybe people look at art in different ways” (P1, group 1, pre-interview) and “can mean a lot to others” (P4, group 1, pre-interview). In addition, one pupil expressed that “Buildings is art” (P3, group 1, pre-interview), illustrating the connection between the two codes. The extract demonstrates how the pupils see art as valuable and that there is a connection between art and buildings. There were several similarities between the pre- and the post-interviews in relation to the code’s *buildings* and *art*. For example, two groups reported art and building as two of the first associations to culture when completing the mind map task. However, in group 3, statements such as “I remember art” (P4, post-interview) and “I remember buildings” (P1, post-interview) indicate that the pupils refer to what they remembered connecting culture to in the pre-interview. This could be one explanation of the consistency of these codes in the pre- and post-intervention interviews.

Another code within the theme ‘Culture as artifacts’ was *clothes*, which included statement where pupils connect clothes to culture. This code was present in the pre-interviews in group 1 with “clothes” (P2) being mentioned as a word they associate with culture. In the post-interviews clothes was mentioned in two groups. It is noteworthy that in group 2’s post-interview there was a disagreement about whether clothing should be associated with culture. This occurred during the ranking task, after P5 suggested to include clothing as one of the items to rank:

P5: Is it possible to write, for example, items of clothing? People have different items of clothing. Food and then clothes?

P2: Yes, but clothes can be quite similar I don't think I associate it with culture.

P4: Neither do I.

P5: I associate it with old culture like so many different clothes.

P1: Yes maybe.

*Group 2, post-intervention interview*

As can be seen from the excerpt above, P2 and P4’s disagreement with P5’s suggestion led P5 to further qualify what they meant by clothes, namely that they associate it with “old culture”. The disagreement resulted in the group not writing clothes in the ranking task, which demonstrates that the groups were not always uniform in their ideas about culture.

The code *entertainment* is defined as something that entertains, which includes music, TV, and games. This code was not present in the pre-interviews, but it was identified in all three groups during the post interviews, including statements such as “popular culture” (P3, group 1, post-interview). Within this code, gaming was a common word mentioned across all groups. In group 2, one of the pupils immediately mentioned gaming as one of the first thoughts on culture, stating “there is this game, and that has culture” (P3, group 2, post-intervention). Additionally, a conversation about Norwegian culture arose which directed group 3 to focus on music’s association to culture:

P3: Yes, yes, yes folk music that is culture.

P1: Folk music that is music too.

*Group 3, post-intervention interview*

As such, the code *entertainment* shows that the learners associated culture with elements such as popular culture, music and gaming, elements that were not present in the pre-interviews.

It should be mentioned that the increase in the frequency of the theme ‘Culture as artifacts’ in group 3’s post interview was mainly due to the code *weapons*. A discussion on the importance of “sword and gun” in the ranking task contributed to an addition of 12 extra codes with quotes such as, “no, I like swords better” (P4, group 3, post-interview). As such, while the topic of weapons was brought up in relation to culture, the ensuing discussion does not indicate a uniform understanding of the associations weapons has to culture within the group.

### **5.1.2 Culture as limited to country**

The theme ‘Culture as limited to country’ includes statements which indicate pupils understanding culture as specific things connected to a country. Interestingly, the occurrence of this theme exhibited a higher frequency across all groups during the post-interview with a notable increase of 60 instances in the post- interview analysis. The theme deals with pupils’ understanding of culture through the code’s *cities*, *language*, and *food*.

‘Culture as limited to country’ included statements where the pupils’ views of culture are associated with countries. This theme was mentioned in all the groups in the pre-interview with, for example, group 1 emphasising that “everyone has culture in their country” (P3, Pre-interview). In addition, when completing the ranking task in the pre-interview, country was rated highly by groups 1 and 2 and in group 2 the pupils agreed on the importance of countries regarding culture:

P1: Countries have a culture.

P3: Yes, every country has a culture.

P2: Yes, I also think country.

P3: I think in a way it seems that almost every country has a culture because culture is in a way what we do.

*Group 2, pre-intervention interview*

The excerpts illustrates that there was a unanimous agreement among the pupils in group 2 that country is an important association to culture.

In the post-interviews, specific countries were mentioned in all groups, e.g., Norway (group 3 in relation to importance), Croatia (group 2 in relation to food differences), North Korea (group 1 in relation to laws), and Ukraine and Russia (group 1 in relation to war). This suggests that the pupils still saw a connection between culture and specific countries in the post-interviews. Especially in group 3, the importance Norway has to culture was emphasised by pupil 3. However, the rest of the group did not share the same view. Presented below is group 3 discussion on whether Norway is important to culture, which occurred during the ranking task:

P3: I do not agree, Norway should be here.

P4: Norway is not more important than religion.

P3: Family lives in this country.

P4: Okay, so.

P2: Yes, but family is in a way your home, you can live anywhere as long as you have a family.

P4: Family is most important.

P2: You can live without Norway.

*Group 3, post-intervention interview*

The discussion above starts with P3 not agreeing with the placement of Norway, then P4 arguing that Norway is not more important than religion. Interestingly, P3 associated the importance Norway has to family living there. On the other hand, P2 and P4 did not agree and expressed how “family is in a way your home” (P2, group 3, post-interview) and that “family is the most important” (P4, group 3, post-interview). In addition, P2 emphasised that one can live without Norway. This illustrates how the pupils in the post-interview did not share a common view of the importance Norway has to the concept of culture.

The codes *languages* and *food* reflect statements that associate culture with the language and culinary traditions of a country. These codes were not present in the pre-interviews. They were reported in all groups in the post-interview with one pupil mentioning “yes, but language, there are lots of different languages in different countries” (P5, group 3, post-



interview). This may illustrate that the pupils connected language to countries. As previously mentioned, the pupils reported that countries have a culture, therefore, this may indicate the connection language has to culture, although this connection was not made explicitly by the pupils. Additionally, food was expressed regarding countries for example, in group 2 they emphasise on “food is actually associated with countries, countries have food” (P2, group 2, post-interview). This quote adds to the understanding that pupils may connect food to countries, and by extension to culture.

### 5.1.3 Culture as creating conflict

The essence of the theme ‘Culture as creating conflicts’ is pupils associating culture with negative aspects. This theme was reported by all groups in the pre-and post-interviews. In the pre-interview the theme was more frequent in group 2 with three more coded instances being identified in the analysis. In contrast to the pre-interviews, the theme emerged with a greater frequency in the post-interviews among groups 1 and 3 with a total of 24 more coded instances. There are several components within the theme ‘Culture as creating conflict’, namely the codes *religion (respect)*, *historical events*, *war* and *racism* which will be presented below.

One of the most frequent codes within this theme was *religion*. Since the pupils perceived religion in different scenarios, the code was split into two with *religion (respect)* being included in this theme. Excerpts coded in relation to *religion (respect)* were mainly responses to the question “Does everybody respect each other’s cultures and why do you think it is like that?” in the pre-and post-interviews. In the pre-interviews, this question created curiosity in the pupils as one pupil stated:

No, I don't think everyone respects but I think they can try or some respect each other cultures fully but others don't, but eh it's a bit stupid really because why should one hate, for example, why should one hate a religion just because they believe in something other than what they believe. (P1, group 1, pre-interview)

In summary, P1 here expresses the belief that not everybody respects each other cultures but acknowledges that some people might try to respect different cultures while other do not. In addition, P1 suggests that it is pointless to hate a religion just because it differs from one own.

This quote presents how the pupil reflected upon inequality in relation to culture and religion before the intervention.

Interestingly, in the pre-and post-interview all groups answered the question by expressing how people do not respect each other's culture with religious discrimination examples. For instance, groups 1 and 3 used the example of people burning the Quran: “No, because in Sweden, they burned the Quran” (P3, group 3, pre-interview) and “It was in Sweden a little while ago someone burned the Quran and that is not good especially for the Muslims. It shows that people don't respect others the way they are” (P1, group 1, post-interview). Both these quotes highlight how the pupils connect the lack of cultural respect to the burning of the Quran in Sweden. In the post-interview, group 1 adds to this reflection by expressing how the example shows that people do not respect each other. These quotes illustrate the pupils' knowledge of real-life examples of discrimination based on religion prior to and following the intervention.

Related to this, the code *historical events* include excerpts where the pupils connect cultural disrespect to specific historical events. This code was mentioned during the pre-interviews in all groups. One historical event that was mentioned was Hitler disliking Muslim and Jewish people. This occurred as a conversation in the pre-interview in group 1, “Hitler didn't like the Muslims or the Jews, so he just got rid of some of them. So not everyone respects religion” (P3, group1, pre-interview). The pupils here present how people do not respect other religions through an example referring to Hitler, indicating a connection between culture and historical events.

Another cultural group that was addressed in relation to historical conflict was the Sami people which was highly focused on in the pre-interviews in two groups. It is important to acknowledge that the results of the pre-interviews may have been impacted by the fact that they were conducted on the Sami's national day. During the post-interview, the Sami culture was reported in group 2, highlighting Sami discrimination:

P2: For example, the Sami, before they didn't respect the Sami, they tried to make them Norwegians, as they called them, and they didn't respect that.

P1: The king even had to apologise to the Sami.

*Group 2, post-intervention interview*

The quotes highlight how the pupils had knowledge of historical events that happened in Norway and their connection to culture, potentially indicating Norwegian history is included in the pupils' view of culture.

*War* was only coded in group 1 in the pre-and post-interviews where they emphasised that the consequence of not respecting other cultures was war. In the pre-interview, when asked “what is not good with culture?” pupil 1 expressed:

“It is good that there is culture, but it leads to war, but if everyone could like or not care so much what others believed it would have been quite good because then there would most likely not have been war” (P1, group 1, pre-interview).

Overall, this quote illustrates P1's reflections around the negative aspects of culture. P1 expresses that culture can contribute to war due to people not respecting each other's beliefs.

In the post-interview when asked “does culture change, why, why not?”, group 1 answered, “I think it's war and money because war can start at any time, money can change things at any time and yes” (P5, group 1, post-interview). The group further supplemented their point by providing an example pertaining to the war in Ukraine and Russia: “and there is a war in Ukraine and Russia, and if Russia manages to take over Ukraine, a lot will change there. For example, maybe a lot of buildings will be demolished, and they have already done so” (P1, group 1, post interview). The group expressed how war can change cultures, with the example of the war in Ukraine. In addition, they emphasised the consequences that war has by linking it to buildings being destroyed. The extracts present how the pupils build on each other's reflections which resulted in the group connecting war and culture to concrete examples of real-life world problems. This connection was only made in the post-intervention interview.

The code *racism* includes statements where the pupils connect cultural disrespect to racism. This code was only reported in the post-interviews and was identified in two groups in relation to discussions about culture and respect. In group 2, for example, they emphasised that “everyone certainly does not respect other people's cultures, there are some who just accept that it is like that, but some, for example, racism, they probably don't accept it and then they don't respect it either” (P2, group2, post-interview). The pupil expressed how people that

are racist do not respect or accept others, which may indicate instances with the pupils reflecting on cultural problems.

### 5.1.4 Culture as daily life

One of the major themes identified in both the pre- and post-interviews was ‘Culture as daily life’ with a total of 121 coded instances in the analysis. Moreover, the post interview data revealed a notable increase in the number of coded instances associated to this theme across all groups. This theme refers to the pupils' view of culture regarding everyday things and encompasses the codes *religion (traditions)*, *family*, *identity* and *way of living*.

*Religion (traditions)* entails the religion and tradition practices in a person’s day-to-day life. This code was identified in all groups in the pre- and post-interviews. For instance, in the pre-interviews when discussing whether people have different cultures, group 1 connected different cultures to religious practices by providing an example:

P1: For example, if you are Muslim and someone who is not Muslim then it is a very different everyday life, for example those who are Muslim....

P4: they must pray 5 times every day...

P1: and those who are not, it's not what they have to do.

*Group 1, pre-intervention interview*

The discussion shows how the pupils thought religious traditions could affect people’s everyday life. Similarly, group 3 also used religion to express how people have different cultures. For instance, the group compared culture to religion: “like in religions, religions they are different” (P2, pre-interviews). As such, connecting culture to religious traditions was a common finding between the groups in the pre-interviews.

During the post-interviews there was a greater emphasis on the relationship between culture and tradition across all participant groups. Groups 1 and 3 both discussed how different types of religion can influence one’s everyday life, for example:

“It has something to say for your everyday life. For example, if you are Muslim, you pray many times a day, 5 times a day or something like that, and then you spend time

on it and your food, for example, is perhaps a little influenced by your culture” (P1, group 1, post-interview).

In this excerpt, the pupil provides the practices of a Muslim person’s everyday life as an example of how culture influences one's everyday life. The strong connection between culture and religion was also seen in group 2, where one pupil argued that “religion is a way of life, but it is more, it is food” (P2, group 2, post-interview). These excerpts suggest that the pupils made a strong link between religion and culture as a way of life in the post-interviews.

The code *family* refers to the pupils’ making connections between everyday culture and family. Mentions of development of family dynamics in relation to culture was prominent in all the participant groups in the pre-and post-interviews. In the pre-interviews, the concept of family was initially introduced in groups 1 and 3 exclusively during the mind-map task, for instance one pupil expressing that “family that is a culture” (P3, Group 3, pre-intervention). However, the term was not recorded in writing, nor was it discussed further, indicating that it was of limited importance to the pupils at the time.

In contrast to the pre-interviews, the post-interview data revealed a strong emphasis on the relationship family being an important part of culture through statements such as “family is basically like the best” (group 1, pre-interviews), “family is pretty important” (group 2, pre-interviews) and “family is very very important” (group 3, pre-interviews). There was a unanimous agreement among all the participants regarding the significance of family. As such, *family* was one of the codes that saw a big increase in prevalence from the pre- to the post-interviews.

The code *identity* was identified in both the pre- and post-interviews, probably since one of the interview questions was “what does culture have to say for our identity?”. However, when identity was mentioned in the pre-interviews, the many non-verbal hesitations, such as “ehh”, suggest that the pupils struggled to explain the concept. Indeed, one pupil explicitly stated that “I don't know what that means” (P2, group 3, pre-interview). Although there were some hesitations to answering this question, group 2 manages to express their thoughts on identity regarding culture:

P2: Ehh I think culture can help make who we are.

P3: Yes, what we do, how we are.

*Group 2, pre-intervention interview*

As the researcher is the pupil's English teacher, the researcher had expectations of their knowledge and understanding of identity when creating the interview questions, as identity was a previous topic in the current teaching year. However, this knowledge was not perceptible in the pre-interviews.

Contrary to this, during the post-interviews the pupils provided more detailed accounts of the relationship between culture and identity. All groups remarked that the concept of culture has a significant relevance to one's identity, with for instance one pupil expressing:

“I thought a little bit that when there are different cultures, it can actually affect identity and it can make you do different things, think different things and lots of things like that, which can affect how you look at things and stuff like that” (P5, group 2, post-interview).

Similarly, to group 2, group 1 shared a similar understanding of identity:

“People can change sports and change identities.... You believe in something and then you don't believe in it anymore, you kind of change your identity or something like that” (P4, Group 1, Post-interview)

These examples show how the participants in the post-interviews discussed how one's identity is affected by culture, and how one's identity might change if the culture changes.

The code *way of living* was developed only from the post-interviews, meaning there were no explicit instances of this theme identified in the pre-interviews. The code includes excerpts where pupils link culture to how people live. It was first referred to during the mind-map task in groups 2 and 3. The fact that the code occurred so early in the interview may suggest that way of living was important to the pupils after the intervention. Way of living was a particularly prevalent association to culture in group 2. In this group, a longer discussion on whether *way of living* was more significant to culture than *religion* occurred, although the group eventually placed *religion* above *way of living*. Additionally, when answering the

question “do we all have the same culture, why, why not”, the pupils in group 2 discuss the connection way of living has to culture:

P (2): We all have different ways of life, which can mean that there are different cultures...

P (4): different sex...

P (3): different lives...

P (5): different thoughts...

P (3): different families...

P (5): There is a lot that separates us from each other and there are many different cultures.

P (2): I feel that there are quite a few different cultures and there are some who have the same cultures, but you don't meet many of them who have exactly the same way of life, even in religion there are differences.

*Group 2, post-intervention interview*

The group builds on P2’s claim that there are different cultures by reflecting on differences between people and P5 emphasises that “there are many different cultures”. P2 elaborates further on P5’s reflections by expressing that some people may have the same culture, however, underlines how that differs to way of life by referring to the differences in religion. These extracts present an understanding of culture as *way of living*, an understanding which was not identified in the pre-interviews.

### **5.1.5 Culture as diverse**

‘Culture as diverse’ includes statements indicating that the pupils view culture as several things which can change and develop. ‘Culture as diverse’ was reported in all of the groups in both the pre- and post-interviews, but with a significance increase in the post-interviews with a total of 50 additional instances coded within the theme. The theme includes the codes, *differences*, *development*, *activities*, *everything* and *school-culture*, which will be presented below.

The code *differences* refer to the pupils’ mentioning differences in relation to culture. In the pre-interviews, there was a unanimous agreement among all groups that people are different

and reflected upon different cultures, and cultures changing all the time. The reflection to the pupils in groups 1 and 3 were neutral, meaning they did not express opinions regarding the topic, rather stated it as facts, such as, “everything changes” (group 1, pre-interviews) and “we are different” (group 3, pre-interviews). In contrast, the pupils in group 2 expressed their reflections on the positive aspects of differences in culture. For example, when discussing the negative aspects of culture, pupil 3 also reflected on the positive aspects and stated “no, maybe it's quite good because if everyone had been alike and believed in the same thing, it wouldn't have been so good because differences then you can learn from each other” (P3, group 2, pre-interviews). As such, while the groups all showed a recognition of culture as *differences* in the pre-interviews, this was most frequently referred to using neutral terms.

In the post-interviews, the groups all provided more detailed reflections around differences in culture. Interestingly, the social issue book implemented in the intervention was referred to by one pupil when reflecting on differences, “It’s like in that book, everyone has different lives, everyone has different beds, everyone is different because everyone has different cultures” (P3, Group 2, Post-interview). Another notable instance involved group 1, where they emphasised the positive aspects of culture highlighting differences “it's very good because it shows that people are different and that they don't try to be just like each other and if you didn't have culture it would be a bit boring to live” (P1, group 1, post-interview). This illustrates how P1’s reflection highlights the positive aspects of cultural diversity and the value of people being different. Group 3 shares a similar reflection to group 1 as they respond, “that people are not exactly the same” (P2, group 3, post-interview) to the question “what is good with culture?”. As such, in contrast to the pre-interviews, the post-intervention responses within this code were most frequently connected to positive aspects of culture.

Moreover, the detailed reflections around differences and culture were particularly the case in group 2, where they emphasise how differences are associated with cultural changes:

“Culture, it can change so quickly. It can change from when you were little until now. From when you were little, you hardly watch TV, you were outside and stuff like that, but for example now you're more inside and gaming and things like that, you weren't so much inside before, so it changes quite quickly with things that come and go” (P3, group 2, post-interviews).



P3 here reflects over how culture changes quickly by providing an example referring to how development can change people's culture. This reflection displays how the participant sees the development of society affecting culture.

Similar to the code *differences*, *development* emerged as relevant to culture in two groups during the pre-interviews. The excerpts coded in *development* often referred to technological development, as can be seen in the following conversation from group 3:

P 3: Development.

P1: Is development culture?

P3: Yes, we have had old Nokias to this [*points at the iPhone*]

*Group 3, pre-intervention interview*

When challenged on whether development is culture by P1, P3 compares the technology present in mobile phones today to that of “old Nokias”, thus connecting development to technology. Similar to the excerpt above, referring development to technology was also seen in the two other groups in the post-interviews. For instance, group 2 explained how culture changes with technology development: “yes, culture changes, for example in the past, they didn't have colour TV, for example, and maybe it wasn't so common to have telephones then” (P2, Group 2, post-interview). Furthermore, development was referred to as globalisation with one group reflecting on this connection with the example of Mc-Donald's:

P1: I take development.

P3: Sword and axes turned into pistoles...

P4: and machine guns and bazookas.

P2: The food got better...

P1: yes, like Mc Donald's.

*Group 3, post-intervention interview*

The participants in group 3 reflected upon development, starting with the development of weapons and moving on to P2 expressing how food has improved and P1 agreeing by referring to Mc Donald's. The groups discussion demonstrates how the pupils' connected development to globalisation. Furthermore, development in relation to culture was also seen as something one cannot stop in group 2:

“I think everyone will probably say yes because there is a lot that has changed now and then in all religions ...no all cultures in a way and it will continue to change through time and there is no way to stop it” (P2, group 2, post-interview).

P2 here highlights that culture changes through the development of technology, which they underline will always continue. As such, the pupils' quotes illustrate an understanding of culture as intertwined, with a particular focus on the development of technology.

The code *everything* includes excerpts where the pupils associate several things, i.e., almost anything, to culture. This code was only identified in group 3 in the pre-interviews and in group 1 in the post-interviews. Regarding the concept of culture, group 3 expressed “culture is like many things, many different things” (P2, group 3, pre-interview). This understanding of culture shares a similar view to group 1 where P5 emphasised that “everything is culture” (P5, group 1, post-interview). Despite not all pupils in group 1 agreeing to this claim, P3 supports this definition of culture by expressing “but everything people bring into culture” (P5, group 1, post-interview). In addition, P5 in group 1 connects this concept of culture when responding to “what has culture to do with one's identity?”:

“It has a lot to say, an extremely lot to say because every person you are with it is in a way culture. Just like if you are at work, it is work culture if you have your colleagues. If you train, then it's training people...” (P5, group 1, post-interview)

Such remarks show how some pupils find it difficult to define culture as something concrete, because it can be approached in numerous ways.

*School-culture* and *activities* were identified in the post-interview transcripts among groups 1 and 2. Although these codes are less frequent in comparison to other codes in the post-interviews, there are some instances to highlight. *School-culture* entails the pupils connecting culture to school and was identified in group 1 during the post-interview tasks, with one pupil asking the group “can we take school?” (P5, group 1, post-interview) and another pupil answering “yes, classroom-culture” (P2, Group 1, post-interview). Additionally, in group 2 school-culture was referred to as an example of how people have different cultures with one

pupil expressing “everyone has different schools” (P3, group 2, post-interview). These instances show how the pupils in the two groups share the connection school has to culture. *Activities* in this study is defined as leisure activities i.e., afterschool sports etc. Activities were mentioned in relation to cultural disrespect and differences. For instance, group 1 demonstrated their understanding of cultural disrespect by providing a hypothetical daily-life example in the post interview:

“And like if you go to a sport and your friend doesn't like it and then your friend says you have to stop the sport, you're bad, rather switch to the best sport like football or something like that and then things change a bit, you might get a different opinion, that you are bad, that you are not good at something.” (P2, group 1, post-interview)

P2 provides an example of cultural disrespect in everyday life with the example being about a friend disliking the sport one plays. P2 expresses how this example may lead the person to change their opinion. This quote may illustrate P2's understanding of how cultural disrespect may occur in people's everyday life. Furthermore, in group 3 the code *activities* were mentioned in relation to the positive aspects of being different: “Just like pupil 3 said, just with leisure activities, everyone can't like the same” (P4, group 3, post-interview). This quote was expressed after P5 mentioned that everyone can not like the same playground equipment, on the playground, as it may cause a queue. As such, instances where the pupils connected culture to hypothetical examples of everyday activities were only identified in the post-interviews.

## **5.2 Comparison between the pre-and post-interview tasks**

To investigate whether pupils understanding of the concept of culture develops through the critical literacy project, two interview tasks were created for the pupils to respond to in groups. As the pupils are young learners, and the concept of culture may be difficult to understand, these tasks were created as an aid for the pupils' discussions. In addition, could the interviews tasks make the interview an engaging process for the pupils. The following section presents a general overview of the differences that emerged from the pre- and post-interview tasks. The results from the mind-map task will be presented first, followed by the ranking tasks. The results will be presented in relation to the five themes presented above.

### 5.2.1 Mind-map results

To compare the results from the pre-and post-mind-map task, the researcher counted the number of words suggested by the pupils in each group. Additionally, the researcher identified the number of words that were repeated both within the groups, and between the pre- and post-interviews. A summary of the results from this analysis is presented in Table 6. It is important to mention that words that shared the same meaning were considered as the same word. For example, “class” being reported in the pre-interview and “class-culture” reported in the post-interview was classified as a repetition.

**Table 6.** *Number of words in the mind map connected to culture, pre- and post-intervention interviews (mind-map task)*

|   | <b>Pre</b> | <b>Post</b> | <b>Number of words repeated in the post-interview</b> |
|---|------------|-------------|---|
| <b>Group 1</b>                                | 8          | 20          | 8   |
| <b>Group 2</b>                                | 11         | 12          | 4   |
| <b>Group 3</b>                                | 9          | 15          | 5   |
| <b>Number of repeated words in two groups</b> | 4          | 6           |   |
| <b>Number of reported words in all groups</b> | 0          | 4           |   |

As can be seen from the table, there were several changes in the number of words associated with culture from the pre- to the post-interviews. In the pre-mind-map task, the groups did not have any words in common. The groups are more comparable in the post-mind-map task as they shared four words, namely *family*, *food*, *language* and *religion*. Moreover, there were six words in common within two of the groups, with groups 1 and 2 sharing *country* and groups 1 and 3 sharing *clothes*, *buildings*, *music*, *art* and *classroom-culture*.

Moving beyond the numbers and looking qualitatively at which themes the different words represent; some different trends can be identified. Words coded within the theme ‘Culture as

artifacts’ were identified in all groups. Additionally, there were different connections between two groups. For example, in group 2 and 3 *artifacts* and *buildings* were presented specifically in relation to the Norwegian culture, i.e. *Three swords in a mountain* and *Munk museum*.

Furthermore, groups 1 and 3 shared the codes *religion*, *art* and *buildings* while groups 1 and 2 shared the theme ‘Culture as limited to country’.

Table 7 presents an overview of the number of words connected to the five themes for each group in the pre and post interviews. In addition, since the total number of words coded in each interview task varies, the percentage of each theme in the pre- and post-interview are presented to demonstrate how common each theme is in relation to the others.

**Table 7.** *Number of words in the post-mind-map related to the five themes and the percentage of words connected to each theme in each interview.*

| Culture as...               | Group 1 |         | Group 2 |         | Group 3 |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                             | Pre     | Post    | Pre     | Post    | Pre     | Post    |
| <b>artifacts</b>            | 3 (43%) | 6 (30%) | 3 (27%) | 1 (8%)  | 6 (67%) | 4 (27%) |
| <b>limited to country</b>   | 2 (29%) | 3 (15%) | 5 (45%) | 4 (33%) | 1 (11%) | 4 (27%) |
| <b>as creating conflict</b> | 0 (0%)  | 3 (15%) | 2 (18%) | 1 (8%)  | 0 (0%)  | 3 (20%) |
| <b>daily life</b>           | 2 (29%) | 5 (25%) | 1 (9%)  | 4 (33%) | 1 (11%) | 2 (13%) |
| <b>diverse</b>              | 0 (0%)  | 3 (15%) | 0 (0%)  | 2 (17%) | 1 (11%) | 2 (13%) |

The data in Table 7 demonstrates that more of the themes were present in the post-mind-map task, with all groups having at least one word connected to each theme. Overall, all groups had an increase in the number of words they produced during the post- mind-map task. This might indicate that the pupils had a larger pool of words that they associated with culture after the intervention.

There was also a difference between the pre- and post-interviews in relation to what the words referred to. In the pre-interviews, the words often referred to specific matters related to Norwegian culture. For example, “Swords in Rock” (group 3, pre-interviews). In the post-interviews, however, the words were frequently more general to the concept of culture, such

as, *religion, family* and *food* being reported in all groups. As such, in addition to an increase in words, the post-interview data suggest a move from more specific words to more general words.

**5.2.2 Ranking results**

During the ranking task, the participants first wrote down five words they related to culture. They then ranked them according to level of importance, with first being the most important to culture and fifth being the least important to culture. One thing to note, is that all groups expressed difficulty in completing the ranking task. In group 2 their initial thoughts after starting the pre-interview were “oh this is difficult” (P1, group 2, pre-interview) and “that is difficult to describe” (P2, group 2, pre-interview). Additionally, there were two instances in the participant groups where pupils wanted to rank two words at the same place. Such remarks show the difficulty of ranking words regarding how they are related culture. This is important to keep in mind when interpreting the results below. The ranking task was analysed with the use of a thematic analysis, applying the five themes presented above.

Table 8 presents the results from the ranking task colour-coded to the five themes. The words are listed in the order in which they were presented by the pupils, meaning the words that were ranked as most and least important are placed in the first and last row respectively.

**Table 8.** *Ranking results connected to the themes through colour coding: Culture as artifacts (in green), culture as limited to country (in pink), culture as creating conflict (in red), culture as daily life (in blue) and culture as diverse (in purple).*

| Group 1   |                   | Group 2      |             | Group 3           |             |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Pre       | Post              | Pre          | Post        | Pre               | Post        |
| Country   | Identity          | Country      | Family      | Historical things | Family      |
| Religion  | Family            | Civilisation | Religion    | Art               | Religion    |
| Ethnicity | History           | Tourism      | Way of life | Old things        | Norway      |
| Buildings | Country           | Seasons      | Food        | Treasures         | Development |
| Art       | Classroom-culture | Sami         | Country     | Buildings         | Sword/gun   |

Similar to what was found in the mind-map activity, there are clear differences between the group's associations to culture, especially in the pre-ranking task. However, some similarities can be identified. For example, groups 1 and 2 shared the themes 'Culture as limited to country' (pink), 'Culture as daily-life' (blue), and 'Culture as creating conflict' (red) while the common theme between group 1 and 3 was 'Culture as artifacts' (green). It's also worth noting that 'Culture as artifacts' (green) was the only theme identified in group 3 during the pre-ranking task, illustrating the importance this theme had to groups members' understandings of the concept of culture prior to the intervention.

In the post-interviews, the ranking-task reveals clear resemblances with all the participant groups as there is a stronger emphasis on the theme 'Culture as daily-life' (blue). Interestingly, the code *family* was ranked highly in all groups, with group 2 and 3 placing it first. Although all groups wrote the code *religion* in the post-mind-map task, it was only reported in groups 2 and 3 in the ranking task. Despite group 1 not including religion in the ranking task, their subsequent discussion presented below showcases their thoughtful considerations and reasoning regarding the topic:

P1: But religion, I feel that we are missing religion, but it's probably a bit under family.

P3: Many families have different religions because there is a family here that believes in, for example, they are Christians, they believe in God and pray every day it's like that there, some believe in Muslim

P1: It has something to do with history and relatives, and the reason why we are different is that we are allowed or think differently about what is, some believe in that, and some believe in something else, and some do not believe in anything and for example, some like that type of food, and others don't.

*Group 1, pre-intervention interview*

The discussion displays the pupils' beliefs about the importance religion has to culture, and how that makes people different. However, they decide not to include it in the ranking task as they believe it goes under words they have already written. In relation to the ranking task, groups 2 and 3 both struggled with the placement of *religion*, however, concluded with religion being ranked second.

A comparison between the pre-and post-ranking tasks indicates that there was a change in how the pupils understood the concept of culture from the pre- to the post-interviews. It is interesting to point out the clear shift in the group's placement of themes. For example, in group 2 the initial thoughts of *country* being the most important association was reported in the pre-ranking task while in the post-ranking task, it is viewed as least important. Furthermore, in group 3 with 'Culture as artifacts' being the only theme associated with culture in the pre-ranking task, while four themes were represented in the post-ranking task, which may indicate a changed understanding of culture.

### **5.3 Learner artifacts results**

Learner artifacts produced during the intervention, were analysed to connect any changes in the concept of culture to the critical literacy intervention. The artifacts were analysed deductively through a thematic analysis, applying the five themes presented in section 5.1. Table 9 provides an overview of the themes that were identified in each of the artifacts, along with example quotes for each theme. Unlike the interviews, the artifacts were originally produced in English, hence no translation was needed. As previously mentioned, artifacts were collected from seven groups. The groups have been coded according to which class they belonged to (C1, C2 or C3) and the group within each class (G1, G2 or G3).



**Table 9.** *An overview of the themes identified in the learner artifacts with example quotes.*

| <b>Tasks</b>  | <b>Culture as...</b>                                       | <b>Example quotes</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Same culture                                     | diverse  | 1. "No, we don't have the same culture." (C1, G1)  |
| 2. Pre-knowledge                                    | Limited to country   | 2. "We know about Peru because we have watched it on TV in class." (C2, G1)  |
| 3. Norwegian chapter                                | daily life, limited to country, and artifacts              | 3. "My family love Indian food so today we had butter chicken and pasjowarry with some mango chutney (C,2 G1).<br>4. "We learn English, Norwegian and we read. Sometimes we play some games on our PC." (C3, G1).<br>5. "We like to play video games like the sims 4, Roblox, Minecraft and much more games." (C3, G2) |
| 4. Similarities and differences in created chapters | diverse daily life   | 6. "Nobody else than Alex is trans." (C2, G1)<br>7. "Jim is adopted." (C3, G2)   |
| 5. Similarities and differences in book             | diverse  | 8. "This is our night sky" (C1, G3)<br>9. "They write their names different" (C3, G1)  |
| 6. Family representation                            | daily life and diverse, creating conflict                  | 10. "No, because every family is unique." (C1, G2)   |
| 7. Opportunities                                    | creating conflict, diverse                                 | 11. "No, they don't have the same opportunities. Some families have more money than others. They have different jobs and live in different houses. Some are big and some are small." (C2, G2)  |
| 8. Inclusion  | diverse  | 12. "We could take chalk and write welcome in his language using google translate. Play a game everybody can. A name game so that he can get to know everybody's name. Learn some words in his language." (C1, G2).  |
| 9. Connections to culture                           | Diverse, limited to country, creating conflict, daily life | 13 "Religion, language history, traditions." (C1, G2)  |

As can be seen in the table, all five themes were identified in the learner artifacts. The most frequent theme seen in the learner artifacts was 'Culture as diverse', which was identified in tasks 1 and 4-9. Another frequent theme in the learner artifacts collected was 'Culture as daily life'. Additionally, 'Culture as limited to country' and 'Culture as creating conflict' were reoccurring themes, evident in learner artifacts collected from three tasks. Furthermore, 'Culture as artifacts' was the least frequent theme presented in the learner artifacts with the theme being only evident in one task, illustrating how the theme was not as prominent in the intervention. Given that there were nine tasks and seven participant groups, only the most

noteworthy findings from the analysis of the learner artifacts will be included in the presentation below.

The most frequent theme, ‘Culture as diverse’, was evident in learner artifacts collected from seven tasks. These instances were documented for example in the completing of the similarities and differences tasks (Tasks 4 and 5). For instance, all the groups reported differences and similarities between the characters in the picture book “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017). Examples 8 and 9 in Table 9, present examples of two of the groups’ response to this task. In addition to this, the code *classroom-culture* was identified in the learner artifacts collected after completing Task 8. This task refers to how the pupils can include Ribaldo from Peru in the classroom. A similarity between the groups was using Ribaldo's native language to welcome him which is illustrated in example 12 in Table 9. Furthermore, in addition to example 12, five groups include Ribaldo by initiating to play different activities which links this task to the code *activities*. As such, the theme ‘Culture as diverse’ is evident in the learner artifacts collected after several tasks during the intervention.

‘Culture as daily life’ was another recurring theme and was reported in the learner artifacts collected after the completion of four of the tasks. For example, as a response to Task 5, the pupils reflected on the similarities and differences between the different Norwegian chapters the participants had created. Examples 6 and 7 presented in Table 9 reveals the pupils’ connection between culture and *identity*. As previously mentioned in section 5.1.4, the pupils struggled to explain *identity* during the pre-interviews, while during the post-interviews the pupils provided more detailed accounts of the relationship between culture and identity, which may illustrate a link between the learner artifacts collected and the post-interviews. In addition to this, when responding to Task 6, that is, “do all families look like this?” referring to the representation in “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017), all groups’ responses aligned with example 10 in Table 9 by expressing “no”, however, the explanations differ with four groups focusing on differences i.e. “families are not exactly the same” (C1,G3) and three groups focusing on the amount of family members. Therefore, ‘Culture as daily life’ was evident in the learner artifacts collected after responding to four of the nine tasks and illustrated links between the learner artifacts and post-interviews.

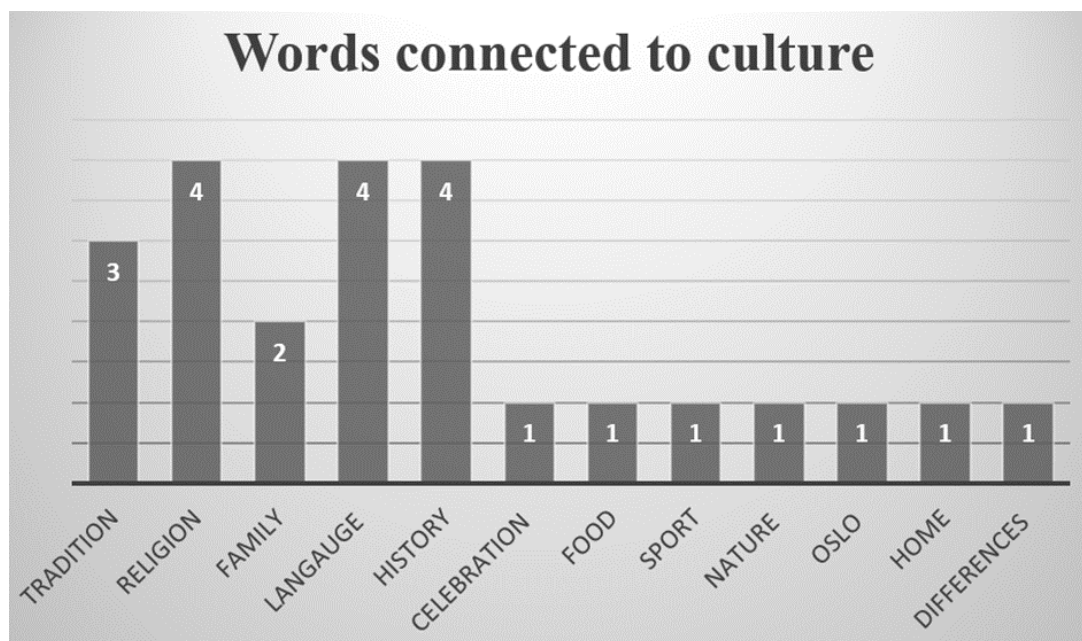
‘Culture as limited to country’ was another prominent theme in the learner artifacts collected, the first of which being conducted in relation to Task 2. This task entailed the pupils reporting the cultures they had prior knowledge about. Interestingly, in this task all groups identified culture with countries. In addition to example 2 in Table 9, Japan, Italy, and Russia were the cultures participants reported to have prior knowledge about. Additionally, this theme was also evident in the Norwegian chapter the participants created (Task 3). Example 3 in Table 9 illustrates one group’s view of the food in Norway. This report of international food being document in the Norwegian chapter is also evident in three groups, mentioning noodles, pizza, and hot dogs. Thus, ‘Culture as limited to country’ is evident in the learner artifacts, regarding the pupils' interpreting cultures to countries in Task 2, and with the code *food* being reported during the completion of the Norwegian chapter, with international food being mostly referred to.

‘Culture as creating conflicts’ was evident in the learner artifacts collected from task 6, 7 and 9. Task 7, that is, “do all families have the same opportunities?” referring to the representation in “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017). The analysis of the learner artifacts collected from Task 7 revealed that, out of the six groups that answered the question, they all expressed that the families in the book did not have the same opportunities due money, which corresponds with example 11 in Table 9. This therefore illustrates how the theme ‘Culture as creating conflicts’ was evident in the learner artifacts.

Despite ‘Culture as artifacts’ not being a prominent theme in the learner artifacts, the theme was present in the learner artifacts collected after the creation of the Norwegian chapter (Task 3). Artifacts were mentioned among all the participant groups. Example 4 referred in Table 9 presents one of the artifacts mentioned, gaming, which was also reported in one other group. Other artifacts reported were books and clothes. As such, although the theme was not as significant as the other themes, the learner artifacts collected after task 3 present evidence of the theme still being relevant.

The results obtained from analysing the learner artifacts collected during Task 9 are highly relevant to this study. They offer valuable insights into the pupils’ associations with the concept of culture towards the end of the intervention, encompassing four of the five themes. As previously mentioned, the task entailed that the group reported four words they connect to culture. Figure 4 provides an overview of the results from this task.

**Figure 4.** Overview of the results in task 9.



As illustrated in Figure 4, the participants among the seven groups shared similarities and differences in their associations to culture. *Religion*, *history*, and *language* were the most frequent connections to culture among the seven groups. Regarding the five themes presented above, ‘Culture as daily life’ was the most recurrent connections the pupils had to culture, while there were no associations related to ‘Culture as artifacts’. In addition to this, six of the words presented in Figure 4 are regarding the theme ‘Culture as limited to country’. As such, the learner artifacts collected after Task 9 illustrate the pupils' understandings of culture in several ways, with *religion*, *history*, and *language* being the most frequent connections to culture.

## **6. Discussion**

To investigate whether the pupils' understanding of the concept of culture developed through a critical literacy project, the following chapter presents a discussion of the results divided into the five themes. For each theme, the pupils' understandings of culture will be discussed in light of theories previously presented, and comparisons will be made between the pre- and post-intervention results. Furthermore, the learner artifacts analysed from the critical literacy intervention will be discussed to link the results to the intervention. In addition to this, the results from the current study will be discussed in relation to previous research discussed in chapter 3.

### **6.1 'Culture as artifacts' diminishing its significance**

As presented in the results chapter, the theme 'Culture as artifacts' refers to pupils understanding culture as man-made objects. The pupils connecting culture to artifacts is reflective of theoretical views of culture, such as, 'high culture' and 'popular culture'. However, the pupils mentions of these theoretical views do not consistently refer a specific cultural view, suggesting that they have a diverse understandings of culture.

Although the theme 'Culture as artifacts' was mentioned more frequently during the post-interviews compared to the pre-interviews, the findings indicate that artifacts were perceived as more significant to culture during the pre-interviews. 'Culture as artifacts' can be seen in relation to encompassing a traditional definition of culture, which is 'the sum of great ideas', that is, the classic works of literature, paintings, music, and physiology, which is also called the 'high culture' of an age. (Hall et al., 2013, p. xvii). Culture in the sense of 'high culture' was evident during the interviews with art being mentioned as culture. This view of art being culture was also identified in Yesil & Bemiroz's (2017) study on teachers' perceptions of the concept of culture. The study reported the teachers' definitions of culture with a list of features related to the term. In the list arts was reported as a feature, which illustrates a connection between the teachers' and pupils' view of culture. However, the significance art had to culture in this study changes. During the pre-interviews two of the participant groups connected art to culture with it also being the subject of a significant discussion. During the post-interviews, while art was still mentioned, these statements were statements of what they remembered from the pre-interviews, rather than expressions of the importance or connections culture have

to the arts. This indicates a diminished importance of the pupils' understandings of the culture as the 'high culture' of an age after the intervention.

In addition to the diminishing importance of the theme, there was a notable change in the perception of culture as the 'high culture' of an age, particularly in the post-interviews where entertainment was mentioned in relation to culture. Entertainment was mentioned among all groups after the intervention. For example, one pupil expressed that "folk music, that is culture" (P3, group 3, post-interview). This understanding of culture can be connected to Jenks' (2004) definition of the everyday concept of culture, where culture is described as "a descriptive and concrete category" (p. 12), which can also be referred to as 'mass culture' or the 'popular culture' of an age (Hall et al., 2013, p. xviii). This view sees culture as the collective frame of arts and intellectual works in one's society. Contrary to the 'high culture' view, this view is shared by a mass part of a society, not just the elite people. As such, this illustrates the pupils' aligning the concept of culture with 'popular culture' of an age after the critical literacy intervention which demonstrates a change.

The shift in the pupils' understandings of culture from 'high culture' in the pre-interviews to 'popular culture' during the post interviews may be linked to the critical literacy intervention. 'Culture as artifacts' was present in the intervention and in the learner artifacts collected. Given that the intervention was critical literacy based, "This is how we do it" (Lamothe, 2017) was implemented to create a critical literacy curriculum. 'Popular culture' was present through several chapters in the book, in addition to the learner artifacts collected after the creation of the Norwegian chapter (Task 3). Despite the limited emphasis on artifacts in the intervention, the theme was still being presented, and as a result, instances of this theme arose during the post-interviews. 'High culture' of an age was not evident in the learner artifacts collected, which may be due to other views of culture being more prominent in the intervention. This implies that the critical literacy intervention may have led to the pupils diminishing the significance of culture as 'high culture' of an age during the post-interviews.

## **6.2 The changes within 'Culture as limited to country'**

The theme 'Culture as limited to country' includes statements which indicate pupils understanding culture as specific things connected to a country. This theme can be said to embody an essentialist view of cultures. Within the essentialist view of culture, culture is seen

a as a concrete structure that is represented through the characterisation of a particular nation (Holliday, 2000, p. 1). During the interviews was this theme mentioned among all groups. The mentioning of this theme corresponds with the findings in Bayyurt (2006) study which investigated Turkish teachers' perceptions of the concept of culture. Bayyurt (2006) reported that they defined culture as “the lifestyle, gastronomy, traditions, etiquette, history, belief and value systems, and language of a group of people living in a city, country” (p. 238). The focus on “languages of a group of people living in a city, country” was explicitly mentioned only during the post interviews with one pupil emphasising “[...] there are lots of different languages in different countries” (P5, group 3, post-interview). As these instances were only present during the post-interviews, this illustrates a change after the intervention, which aligned with the teachers’ understandings of the concept of culture presented in Bayyurt’s (2006) study.

One noteworthy change following the implementation of the critical literacy intervention, pertains to the pupils’ perception of the importance of countries to culture. During the pre-interviews, two groups ranked countries as the most important association to culture in the pre-ranking task, indicating an essentialist view of culture. In contrast, the post-interview responses indicated a shift in the pupils’ perception of the association between countries and culture, with countries being viewed as a relatively unimportant factor in the post-ranking task. As shown in section 5.1.2, the pupils' focus was rather on mentioning specific countries to exemplify situations related to culture during the post-interview. This shift suggest that the intervention led to a decrease in the significance countries had to culture, indicating a reduction in the pupils’ understanding of culture through an essentialist view after the intervention.

Although there was a significant change after the intervention, there was one occasion during the post-interview where the importance of countries to culture was highlighted. This happened in group 3 where a discussion of the importance of Norway arose. During this discussion, which can be seen in section 5.1.2, P3’s understanding on the importance of Norway in relation to culture can be linked to Kramsch (1998, in Kramsch, 2006) definition of culture. She defines culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” (p 17). This understanding of culture highlights the idea of culture providing a principle for people to unite (Jenks, 2004, p. 8), which was less prominent during the post-interviews, however, may express the thoughts

behind P3's views of Norway's importance to culture. This instance demonstrates how the pupils can differ in their understandings of culture after the intervention, potentially providing evidence of the difficulty in changing one's view of culture.

Another interesting change that occurred after the critical literacy project was the mentions of food during the post-interviews. As this was not present in the pre-interviews this may be a result of the critical literacy intervention. As previously mentioned, the critical literacy intervention was based around the social issue book "This is how we do it" (Lamothe, 2017) which focuses on the everyday life of seven children around the world. The book highlights several viewpoints, which can be linked to the second dimension of critical literacy practices. The dimension Considering Multiple Viewpoints allows pupils to investigate competing narratives that describe social and political realities (Lewison, et al., 2015, p. 10). The presence of food is notable in the book "This is how we do it" (Lamothe, 2017), as well as in the collected learner artifacts and during the post-interview's, which may indicate a link between the intervention and the post-interviews, signifying a change.

However, despite "This is how we do it" (Lamothe, 2017) and the learner artifacts collected after the Norwegian chapter (Task 3) both being related to culture, they do not share the same view of culture, particularly regarding food. In the social issue book, the characters' food choices are linked to traditional dishes within that country, connecting an essentialist view of culture to little c culture. In contrast, the learner artifacts collected after the Norwegian chapter (Task 3) illustrated the pupils connecting a non-essentialist view of culture to little c culture, as four groups reported different food dishes from around the world, i.e., butter chicken, noodles, pizza, and hot dogs. This contrast highlights that food in Norway is not strongly associated with the national culture, indicating a more nuanced understanding reported by the pupils. As such, despite different cultural views presented in the social issue book and the collected learner artifacts, the implementation of a social issue book encouraged the learners to engage in the dimension of Considering Multiple Viewpoints, which may have contributed to a change occurring in the pupils' view of 'Culture as limited to country' after the intervention.



### 6.3 The pupils' reflections on 'Culture as creating conflict'

The theme 'Culture as creating conflict' refers to pupil statements that focused on the negative aspects of culture in the world and was identified in all groups during the interviews. The theme 'Culture as creating conflict' exhibited comparatively less change following the critical literacy intervention, suggesting that the pupils' understanding of the concept of culture in this regard was established before the intervention. Therefore, the findings presented will first focus on their understandings of culture prior the critical literacy project.

The findings suggest that the pupils preconceived understandings of culture complied with the post-modernist perspective of culture. Kramsch (2006) emphasised how English differs from traditional language teaching. Therefore, culture in the teaching of English has been redefined as a post-modernist concept through three elements discourse, identity, and power (Kramsch, 2006, p. 16). For instance, the pupils associating cultural disrespect to historical events was reported among all groups. In section 5.3.1 one historical event mentioned during the pre-interviews was Hitler's prejudice against Muslims and Jews expressed by group 1. The connection group 1 makes to historical events can be seen in the post-modernist element discourse. In this view, the importance language has to history is introduced, with demonstrating how history is continuously re-evaluated through language (Kramsch, 2006, p. 17). This illustrates how the pupils view of the concept of culture in relation to historical events, which could have been acquired through the study of languages, prior the critical literacy intervention.

Another theoretical perspective on culture which can shed light on this theme is big c culture. The humanistic concept, otherwise known as, big C culture can be taught by utilising the national language to teach topics within the nation's history, art and literature (Kramsch, 2006, p. 13). This view of culture was evident through the pupils' mentions of history. For example, the Sami people's history, which was relatively frequent during pre-interviews in two groups. The example of Sami people's history arose in one group regarding cultural disrespect: "The king had to apologise to the Sami because everyone had treated them badly" (P2, group 2, pre-interview). The connection the pupils in group 2 make to the Sami's people's history can be a result of big C culture being taught in school. Previous research on teachers' perspectives on the concept of culture revealed that teaching little c culture was favoured in seven countries (Bandura & Sercu, 2005). However, in a Norwegian setting,

Listuen's (2017) findings revealed that teachers mainly taught big C culture due to cultural themes being historical. As such, the high focus on the Sami people in the pre-interview, indicates the pupils view of culture as big C culture, which may be a result of their prior teachers' perceptions of culture.

Although the lack of major changes within this theme suggests that the intervention had limited influence on the pupils' understandings of 'Culture as creating conflict', some of the participant appeared to have shifted their focus away from the big C culture view during the post-interviews. As presented in section 5.1.3, during the post interview the frequency of Sami people's history decreases and is only reported in one group, "for example, the Sami, before they didn't respect the Sami, they tried to make them Norwegians, as they called them, and they didn't respect that" (P2, group 2, post-interviews). This could be a result of the critical literacy intervention focusing on cultural perspectives other than big C culture. Additionally, big C culture was not evident in learner artifacts collected. Group 2 however, restates the same comment in the post-interview, which may indicate the importance of the Sami people's history to their view of culture. This could be due to big C culture providing value and meaning in a national community (Kramsch, 2006, p. 13). Despite the mentions of the Sami history by group 2, there was a decrease in the discussion of this topic during the post-interviews. This implies a shift in the pupils' perspective, as they appear to view big C culture as less relevant to the overall concept of culture, possibly indicating a change after the intervention.

While the changes in this theme were limited following the intervention, there were instances that suggest a possible development in the pupils' understandings of the post-modernistic element identity that should be acknowledged. During the pre-interviews, one pupil responded to the question "Does everybody respect each other's cultures and why do you think it is like that?" by expressing, that it is pointless to hate a religion just because it differs from one's own. This understanding can be connected to the post-modernist element identity. More specifically, a concern within this view of culture is that culture can become political through stereotyping individuals and essentialising national characters (Kramsch, 2006, p. 18). This reflection emphasised the element identity in the post-modernist perspective during the pre-interviews, indicating the pre-existing viewpoint to one pupil regarding the concept of culture. However, as mentioned in section 5.1.3, two new cultural topics emerged during the post-interviews, namely the pupils emphasising that war is a result of the negative aspects of

culture and connecting cultural disrespect to racism. The pupil's reflections on these two topics can also be connected to the element identity in the post-modernist perspective, which illustrates multiple instances where pupils' reflections align the concept of culture to this perspective. As such, the collective alignment on the post-modernist element identity reported during the post-interviews indicates a potential shift in the understandings of the concept of culture following the critical literacy intervention.

Another instance, that points to reflections on cultural dilemmas such as, the unequal social and moral values between people, can be found in the post-interviews. Interestingly, a similarity reported between the pre-and post-interviews is the use of religious discrimination examples, which corresponded with the element power within the post-modernist view of culture. Culture as power assert that everyone has the moral right to be heard and listened to, based on the principle of equal worth, but unfortunately, the principle is not implemented in practice (Kramsch, 2006, p. 19). During the interviews, two groups mentioned the example of people burning the Quran: "No, because in Sweden, they burned the Quran" (P3, Group 3, Pre-interview). This discrimination example can be referred to as 'culture wars'. The term 'culture wars' was implemented to describe the conflict between different cultures' social and moral values (Taylor, 1994, in Kramsch, 2006). The pupils use burning the Quran as an example of people culturally disrespecting others but with no further reflections, which illustrates the pupil's prior knowledge of culture to the post-modernist element power. In the post-interview, however, group 1 adds to the same example by reflecting "it shows that people don't respect others the way they are" (P1, Group 1, Post-interview). The reflections on the unequal social and moral values between people mentioned during the post-interview adds to the argument that the pupils may have developed an increased understanding of the concept of culture from a post-modernist perspective following the intervention.

'Culture as creating conflict' was present in the intervention and in the learner artifacts collected in relation to the critique of the social issue book, which could suggest a possible explanation for the increased occurrence of reflections during the post-interview.

Implementing social issues books allows teachers and pupils to actively participate in texts (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 384). The implementation of the social issue "This is how you do it" (Lamothe, 2017) encouraged the pupils to engage in the dimension of Focusing on socio-political issues. In this dimension, pupils analyse language and power and examine the social structures that seem to be accepted in society (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 11). Focusing on

socio-political issues were evident in the collected learner artifacts from Task 6, that is “do all families look like this?” and Task 7 “do all families have the same opportunities?” referring to the picture book. Here, the pupils utilised the cultural resources they acquired from the intervention to reflect upon these questions. The collected learner artifacts reported the pupils critiquing the social issue book. The learner artifacts collected after Task 6 revealed that there was a unanimous agreement among all the groups that the representation of families in the picture book does not reflect the diversity of actual families. Additionally, out of the six groups that responded to Task 7, they all expressed that families do not have the same opportunities. As such, the implementation of the dimension of Focusing on socio-political issues may have contributed to the increased reflections to this theme during the post-interviews.

#### **6.4 The importance of ‘Culture as daily life’**

As mentioned in the results chapter, the post-interview data revealed a notable increase in the number of associations to the theme ‘Culture as daily life’ across all groups, therefore this theme presents mostly the pupils’ understandings of the concept of culture after the critical literacy project. This theme refers to the pupils’ view of culture as regarding everyday practices. The instances of this theme being reported aligns with different cultural perspectives, such as the non-essentialist view of culture, little c culture, and the post-modernist perspective of culture.

A marked disparity between the pre- and post- interviews within this theme was evident in several of the pupils’ associations to culture, one example being the connection identity has to culture. Identity as culture is an element within the post-modernist perspective of culture. Norton (1997) refers to identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). The concept of identity thus highlights individuality in culture rather than the collective. As seen in the results, prior to the intervention identity as culture was reported as challenging to comprehend by the pupils in most of the interviews, with the exception of one group responding to its connection to culture. In the post-interviews, however, the participants displayed an increased understanding of identity in relation to culture, suggesting a change after the intervention. All groups remarked that the concept of culture has a significant relevance to one’s identity with two of the groups sharing

a similar understanding of its connection. As previously mentioned in the results chapter, the pupils expressed that one's identity might change if the culture changes, thus implying that culture affects one's identity. The heightened reflection on identity in the post-interviews illustrates that the pupils view of the concept of culture after the intervention aligned more closely with the post-modernist element identity.

The presence of the post-modernist element identity in the learner artifacts further strengthens the suggestion that this change can be linked to the intervention. The element of identity was for example illustrated through the learner artifacts collected after responding to the similarities and difference between the Norwegian chapters (Task 4), where, for example, two groups stated: "Nobody else than Alex is trans." (C2, G1), and "Jim is adopted." (C3, G2) as two differences between the Norwegian chapters, revealing the pupils connecting culture to identity. As mentioned in the theoretical background chapter, the element identity, within the post-modernist perspective, represents the dominant view held by many English teachers worldwide (Kramsch, 2006, p. 18). As such, the instances of this view of culture being evident during the post-interviews illustrates a change after the critical literacy project.

Despite the significant contrast between the pre-and post-interview pertaining to this theme, there were similarities evident in the interviews that suggests that the pupils developed their understandings of culture after the intervention. This was specifically evident with the use of religious practices as examples to compare the differences in religion to the differences in culture. The connection religious practices had to culture can be referred to as a 'small culture' of everyday life, which entails the native speaker's ways of being (Holiday, 1999, in Kramsch, 2006, p. 13). During the pre-interviews, the different religious practices the pupils mentioned can be seen as examples of 'small cultures'. Although there were instances where these examples occurred, the pupils did not add reflections about how they associate these examples to culture. In contrast to this, in the post-interviews there were reported instances where the pupils build on the connection religious practices had to culture. As presented in section 5.1.4, one group mentioned this though providing explicit examples, then referring to how choices made in our everyday life may be influenced by the culture one has. Although, there was not a significant difference between the pre-and post-interview with regards to the examples they connected to culture, the pupils displayed a greater degree of clarity in articulating the connection the concept of culture had to religious practices after the

intervention. This signifies a development after the critical literacy project with regards to their conviction of the connection between the two concepts.

In contrast to the pre-interviews, the significant link between family and culture was visible among all groups during the post-interviews, which may indicate a change following the critical literacy intervention. As previously mentioned in the results chapter, in the pre-interviews, family was superficially mentioned without elaborating on its significance to culture. In the post-interviews, however, the importance family had to culture was expressed among all the groups, with a unanimous agreement within each group. The significance of family was also evident in the interview tasks with the family being reported as an important association to culture during the post-interviews. Family can be considered as one of the small cultures in a person's everyday life, aligning with the concept of culture as 'small culture'. In the non-essentialist view, culture is seen as dynamic and changing, thus people can belong to more than one culture (Holliday, 2000, p. 2). As such, the pupils view of culture changes after the intervention, as evidenced during the post-interviews, where the pupils acknowledge the significance of individuals belonging to different cultures, which aligns with the non-essentialist view of culture.

The pupils' heightened focus on the importance family had to culture during the post-interview may have been influenced by the critical literacy intervention. There are several artifacts collect by the participants in the intervention which may illustrate this reasoning. One example of this is the learner artifacts collected from Task 7, which includes the pupils' reflections on whether the families in the picture book have the same opportunities. Out of the six learner artifacts collected from this task, all the participant groups responded to the question with that the families in the book did not have the same opportunities due to financial reasons, with one group stating, "Every family should have the same opportunities but they don't because they do not have the same amount of money..." (Class 2, Group 2, Intervention). This extract illustrates the pupils reflecting on how the families represented in the picture book have different possibilities, and how this affected their culture. As such, the focus on family in the intervention may have potentially influenced the pupil's perception of family as culture, as is also evident by their responses in the post-interviews. This signifies instances of the pupils viewing the concept of culture differently after the critical literacy intervention.

Another instance that exemplifies a change after the intervention was the pupils' connecting way of living to culture. Instances of this were only identified in the post-interviews, suggesting that the intervention may have brought a change in their understandings of culture. This understanding of culture was subsequently emphasised in a discussion in one of the groups. The pupils built on each other reflections with one pupil emphasising, "we all have different ways of life, which can mean that there are different cultures (P2, Group 2, Post-interview). This extract illustrates the pupil reflecting on the connection culture has to ways of living. Perceiving ways of living as culture corresponds to little c culture, as it emphasises the native speaker's ways of being (Kramsch, 2006, p. 13). The pupils heighten perception of culture as little c culture during the post-interviews may have been a result of the implementation of the social issue book "This is how we do it" (Lamothe, 2017). As previously mentioned, the book focuses on the day of the lives of seven children around the world, hence way of living being a prominent theme in the book. Additionally, way of living was also evident in the learner artifacts collected from the participants after creating the Norwegian chapter (Task 3), here the emphasis of culture and way of living were tightly linked, which also may have contributed to the pupil's understandings of 'small culture' after the intervention. Given this, in addition to the fact that way of living as culture was solely referenced during the post-interviews, it can be strongly suggested that the critical literacy intervention influenced their understandings of the concept of culture towards aligning with little c culture.

## **6.5 The diverse understandings of the concept of culture**

As outlined in the results chapter, the theme 'Culture as diverse' was reported among all groups in both the pre- and post-interviews, but with an increased significance among all groups during the post-interviews, implying a change after the intervention. The theme 'Culture as diverse' challenges the notion of culture as a singular definition or characterisation and can be linked to the non-essentialist perspective. The non-essentialist perspective views culture as dynamic and changing, with the understanding that people can be associated to several cultures (Holliday, 2000, p. 2). This view of culture was also evident in Løtveit & Bugge's (2020) study of teacher students understanding of the concept of culture dynamic. The study reported that the third-year student teachers provided explicit examples such as, "Culture is a set of values, norms, traditions that is continually changing" (Løtveit & Bugge, 2020, p. 34). The pupils viewing culture as fluid was evident both in the pre-and post-

interviews, for example in statements such as “culture is like many things, many different things” (P2, group 3, pre-interview) and “everything is culture” (P5, group 1, post-interview). In comparison to the pre interviews, the theme exhibited an additional of 50 coded occurrences during the post-interview, which may signify a development in the pupils’ view of culture as non-essentialist, indicating a change after the critical literacy intervention.

One of the changes within this theme pertains to the pupils’ understandings of culture as ‘small culture’, which was evident in the post-interview data, suggesting a change after the intervention. ‘Small cultures’ refers to the non-essentialist view with the idea that the world consists of numerous human groupings (Holiday, 2000, p. 2). The pupils connect this view of ‘small cultures’ to several situations. For instances, as stated in section 5.1.5, one pupil expressed this understanding by stating that culture encompasses various aspects of life, such as work culture, as each person contributes to the cultural dynamics in different settings. The mentioning of work culture can be referred to as a ‘small culture’.

Another ‘small culture’ mentioned during the post-interviews was activities. As presented in the results chapter, one group connected activities to culture disrespect by emphasising that engaging in different activities, such as sports, can lead to changes in opinions and perceptions when one's skills is evaluated by others. Interestingly, this extract was the only example reported of cultural disrespect pertaining to a child’s everyday life. Other cultural disrespect reflections were related to religions and national cultures. As this excerpt was identified in the post-interviews, it illustrates how the pupils view the concept of culture as ‘small cultures’ after the intervention, signifying a change. Another intriguing aspect of the pupils’ associations of culture as ‘small cultures’ was the reference to classroom culture. The two instances of this occurring were solely during the post-interviews, with one pupil expressing “everyone has different schools” (P3, group 2, post-interview). As such, the reports of work culture, activities and school culture during the post-interviews illustrated several instances of the pupils aligning culture with ‘small cultures’. The increased frequency of these instances of culture as ‘small cultures’ during the post-interviews suggests a change towards a more non- essentialist view of culture after the critical literacy intervention.

Culture as ‘small cultures’ was evident in the critical literacy intervention and the learner artifacts collected, which may link this view of culture being mentioned frequently during the post- interviews to the intervention. Different types of ‘small cultures’ were present in the



intervention through the social issue book “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017), which may suggest an explanation of the mentioning of activities and school culture during the post-interviews. Additionally, the analysis of the learner artifacts collected from the Norwegian chapter (Task 3) also revealed instances of ‘small cultures’. As this view of culture was evident among all the learner artifacts collected, this may have influenced the pupils with the focus of the non-essentialist view of culture being prominent, especially regarding culture as ‘small cultures’.

Another example of development resulting from the intervention is the pupils’ alignment with Kramersch’s (2015) characteristics of culture. This was for example seen in the interviews with the pupils connecting culture to development. During the pre-interviews, development as culture was generally mentioned by two groups, while during the post-interviews it was mentioned and reflected upon among all groups. The connection the pupils made to culture was highly focused on the development of technology e.g., “yes, culture changes, for example in the past, they didn't have colour TV, for example, and maybe it wasn't so common to have telephones then” (P2, Group 2, post-interview). Viewing culture as technology is prominent with Kramersch (2015). Due to globalization and the development of global information technologies, Kramersch (2015) presented two characteristics of culture, (1) *culture as mobile*, and (2) *culture schema as changing over time* (Meadows, 2016, p. 160). This view of culture is popular within the language study field as culture is affected by the globalization of the world (Kramersch, 2015 p. 413). Additionally, during the post-interviews an interesting example was the pupils’ references to globalisation with one group reflecting on this connection with the example of Mc-Donald’s.

Globalisation was also evident in the learner artifacts collected regarding the Norwegian chapter (Task 3), indicating how the intervention may have contributed to this change in the pupils’ understandings of culture. This was evident with two groups mentioning technology in relation to gaming (C3, G1 and G2) and one group highlighting globalisation through the example of eating Mc Donald’s for breakfast (C1, G3). It is worth mentioning that there was only one instance where technology was perceived as culture during the pre-interviews. The frequency of the reflections during the post-interviews thus indicates that the intervention developed their understanding of culture. Furthermore, the similarities between the learner artifacts and post-interviews suggest a development in their understandings which align with the characteristics of culture presented by Kramersch (2015).

Another change that was evident during the post-interviews was the significance of cultural diversity among the pupils. Despite the agreement among two of the participant groups during the pre-interviews regarding the connection between culture and differences, it was only after the intervention that this was mentioned among all groups and their reflections on these differences became evident. During the pre-interviews, mentions of differences regarding culture were very general, “everything changes” (Group 1, Pre-interviews) and with instances of the pupils mentioning it regarding people “we are different” (Group 3, Pre-interviews). During the post-interviews, on the other hand, differences regarding culture were reflected upon in relation to several scenarios among all the groups. Emphasis on differences in culture can be seen in Kramersch’s second characteristic of culture, namely *culture schema as changing over time*. She states that “Cultures are portable schemas of interpretation of actions and events that people have acquired through primary socialisation and which change over time as people migrate or enter into contact with people who have been socialized differently” (Kramersch, 2015, p. 409). A similarity between all groups during the post-interviews was the reflections around the positive aspects of differences associated with culture, which was not evident during the pre-interviews. Thus, the pupils’ reflections around their understandings of culture as diverse, aligning with Kramersch’s (2015) definition, was significantly strengthened after the intervention.

Kramersch’s (2015) definition of culture is also evident in the critical literacy intervention, which may have resulted in the development of this understanding during the post-interviews. This was seen through the pupils working in the dimension Interrogating multiple perspectives. In this dimension the pupils were presented with the social issue book “This is how we do it” (Lamothe, 2017) which presents multiple viewpoints. The aim in this dimension is for the pupils to understand multiple realities (Lewison et al., 2015, p. 10). Interestingly, the social issue book implemented in the intervention was referred to by one pupil when reflecting on differences, “It’s like in that book, everyone has different lives, everyone has different beds, everyone is different because everyone has different cultures” (P3, Group 2, Post-interview). This quote illustrates how the pupil linked the picture book to cultural differences, indicating that by the pupils working in the second dimension of critical literacy practises it developed their understanding of Kramersch’s (2015) definition of culture, that is, culture changing over time.

Furthermore, the learner artifacts collected also present evidence of instances where differences and culture are linked. For example, the learner artifacts collected from Task 4 and 5 which refers to the similarities and differences between the Norwegian characters (Task 4) and to the characters in the book (Task 5) e.g., “everyone eats different food” (C2, G1) and “everyone has the same night sky” (presented in three groups). As such, the critical literacy intervention and the learner artifacts collected after these tasks may present how the pupils developed their understanding of Kramsch’s (2015) definition of culture during the post-interviews.

## **7. Conclusion**

The current study investigated year 5 EFL pupils' understanding of the concept of culture and explored whether and how their understanding of the concept developed after a critical literacy project. In the following sections, a summary and a conclusion of the study will be presented. Then, implications of the findings of the study will be reviewed. Moreover, in section 7.3 the limitations of the study will be discussed before suggestions for future research are introduced.

### **7.1 Summary and main findings**

The aim of this study was to investigate pupils' understandings of the concept of culture before and after a critical literacy project. As far as the researcher is aware, there has been no previous research on primary school pupils' understandings of the concept of culture, and the current study thus aims to address this research gap.

The study employed qualitative research methods and data was collected through group interviews, with one group from each class of the three participating classes, and learner artifacts collected from a total of 35 pupils. The group interviews consisted of two tasks and six interviews' questions and were conducted both pre-and post-intervention. The learner artifacts collected are responses from the nine tasks introduced during the intervention.

The findings provide insight into the pupils' understanding of the concept of culture through five main themes. Within the theme 'Culture as artifacts' a shift from 'high culture' to 'popular culture' was identified after the intervention. The theme 'Culture as limited to country' initially held significance in the pre-interviews, aligning with Kramsch's (1998) definition of culture and the essentialist view. However, its significance was found to be decreased in the post-interviews. In the theme 'Culture as creating conflicts' the pupils' perception of big C culture declined after a critical literacy intervention, accompanied by the development of their understanding of the post-modernist perspective. Similarly, 'Culture as daily life' demonstrated a closer alignment with the post-modernist element identity during

the post-interviews. Additionally, the pupil's recognition of the non-essentialist view and the significance of little c culture were evident during the post-interviews, with the emphasis on culture as 'small cultures'. Notably, 'Culture as diverse' resonated strongly among all groups during the post-interviews, with the pupils aligning with the characteristics of culture presented by Kramersch (2015). The pupils perception of culture during the post-interview, was also seen as dynamic and changing, aligning with the non-essentialist perspective. Moreover, the learner artifacts collected from the intervention revealed recurring themes of the non-essentialist view, little c culture, Kramersch (2015) characteristics of culture and the post-modernist perspective.

To sum up the findings, the pupils' prior understandings of culture focused mostly on 'high culture', big C culture, the essentialist view of culture and the post-modernist perspectives of culture. In the post-interviews the findings demonstrate the pupils viewing culture within the non-essentialist view and little c culture, with 'small culture' being frequently reported. These cultural perspectives were implemented during the critical literacy project, which indicates a connection between the critical literacy intervention and post-interviews. Additionally, the post-interviews revealed that the pupils heightened their reflections of culture complying with Kramersch (2015) characteristics of culture. A similarity between the pre- and post-interviews is the pupils view of culture corresponding to the post-modernist perspective, which is not so surprising as it is the dominant view of many teachers of English around the world (Kramersch, 2006, p. 18). The findings revealed a shift in the pupils' views of culture, demonstrating relevance to the LK20 curriculum. As such, the study argues that the critical literacy project did develop their understanding of the concept of culture.

## **7.2 Implications of the findings**

As previously mentioned in the theoretical background chapter, the intervention was based on the view of culture as an everyday life. This view of culture aligns with the non-essentialist view of culture and the sociolinguistic concept i.e., little c culture. As the findings from the post-interview revealed a heightened focus on these two views of culture, it seems that the pupils were influenced by the critical literacy project. As the intervention was implemented using the instructional model of critical literacy (Lewison, et al., 2015), it can be concluded

that this pedagogical approach is a viable method for teaching learners about the non-essentialist and sociolinguistic views of culture.

Previous research on Norwegian teacher perceptions of culture revealed that teaching culture in the EFL-classroom focused on culture as a humanistic concept, or big C culture with the emphasis of the themes being historical (Listuen, 2017). The preference for big C culture among the teachers in Listuen's (2017) study is not surprising, given that this perspective of culture has been encouraged by the nation-state and educational system throughout the years. As Kramsch (2006) notes, the goal of such systems is to establish a national community where culture holds significance and relevance (p. 13). However, this view of culture contradicts to the Norwegian curriculum regarding the English subject, as illustrated for instance as a competence aim after year 7, "investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b, p. 7). This competence aim corresponds with the non-essentialist and sociolinguistics views of culture presented in this study, in addition to the post-modernist element identity and intercultural competence. As the critical literacy intervention changed pupils' understanding of the concept of culture, aligning it with the curriculum aim in the English subject. Consequently, a method teachers could consider for the topic of culture is the implementation of critical literacy practices. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the findings from this study revealed that pupils' prior understandings of culture did not comply with the LK20 curriculum. Thus, critical literacy practices not only enhance pupils' learning of culture but also raises teachers' awareness of how their perception of culture can influence pupils' learning.

### **7.3 Limitations and avenues for further research**

This section demonstrates the limitations of the current study and highlights possible avenues for further research. As mentioned in section 4.4, there are several difficulties and challenges that may arise when implementing classroom research. The findings of this study draw on group interview data and learner artifacts collected through the intervention designed by the researcher. Since the researcher was involved in guiding and facilitating the intervention, both the researcher and the pupils may have influenced each other (Miles & Huberman, 2014, p.

312). These reflections were mentioned in section 4.4 when discussing how the researcher practiced reflexivity during the study. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that the researcher's dual role as both their teacher and as a researcher might have influenced the findings. Some pupils may have been inclined to provide response that they thought would please the researcher, potentially leading to biased results. This was evident during the pre-interviews in one group, with pupils asking if their connections to culture were correct when completing the mind-map task.

As the intervention was implemented in three year 5 classes, there were three main limitations: (1) working with pupils, (2) unexpected events and interruptions and (3) meeting different needs and standards. These three limitations were in presented Dörnyei's (2007) list, thereby the researcher had prior awareness of the potential of these issues arising. Working with pupils was a limitation that arose mostly during the intervention. As mentioned in section 4.2.1, Dörnyei (2007) noted that in L2 studies girls and boys perform differently, suggesting the need to consider subgroups in the sample. Therefore, all groups in this study included both girls and boys. However, this choice presented limitations as it led to conflicts among certain pupils and subsequently caused interruptions. Furthermore, there researcher observed that in several groups, either the girls or the boys dominated decision-making when responding to tasks in the intervention, impacting the analysis of the collected learner artifacts. Therefore, it would be interesting if further research investigating on pupils' understandings of the concept of culture would focus on either individual tasks and interviews or implement same sex groups.

Moreover, the intervention revealed limitations in terms of unexpected events and the need to meet different needs and standards. Due to a scheduling conflict, one class missed a lesson of the intervention, which potentially impacted the study's findings. Furthermore, the varying levels of English proficiency among the pupils posed as a limitation to the study. Despite the tasks providing a translation to Norwegian, the researcher had to adapt explanations in the intervention to accommodate the diverse range of language abilities, which may have influenced the learner artifacts collected.

Finally, further research is recommended in order to broaden the extent of the current study, which was limited to data from three classrooms. By investigating pupils' understanding of culture with a larger sample, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved. This could contribute to a stronger conclusion, as the findings for this thesis cannot be generalised to other educational settings, given that one cannot differentiate between the effects of the social issue book and the critical literacy framework. Conducting similar studies with for example pupils with different ages would provide valuable insights into how EFL pupils understand the concept of culture. It is noteworthy to mention, that the findings from this study cannot be generalised to all critical literacy interventions. Therefore, future researcher should continue to focus on the pupil's perspective of culture by implementing different critical literacy interventions as it can contribute to a more holistic understandings of the topic.



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## *Appendix 1. Interview guide*

### Interview tasks in Norwegian

1. Hva er kultur? Hva assosierer du med kultur? Lag et tankekart sammen med kultur i midten.
2. Ransjer 5 ting som er viktig innenfor kultur med 1 som viktigst og 5 minst viktig.

### Interview questions in Norwegian

1. Hvorfor har mennesker forskjellige kulturer?
2. Hva har kultur å si for vår identitet?
3. Forandrer kultur seg, hvorfor, hvorfor ikke?
4. Respekterer alle kulturer til hverandre, hvorfor tror dere at det er sånn?
5. Hva innebærer det at noen får kultur sjokk?
6. Hva liker du og ikke liker med kultur, hvorfor?

## Appendix 2. Learner artifacts tasks

*Note:* This illustrates the presentation of the tasks to the pupils

Do we all have the same culture in Norway?

*Har vi alle samme kultur i Norge?*

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Which culture in the book did you know of, why and where?

*Hvilken kultur i boka visste dere om, hvorfor og hvor?*

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*Note:* This is an extract, not all the chapters the pupils responded to (task 3)

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>This is me.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>                       | <p>This is where I live.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>       | <p>This is who I live with.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> |
| <hr/> <hr/>  | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>  | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>   |
| <p>This is what I eat for Breakfast.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> | <p>This is how I go to school.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> | <p>This is how we learn.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>    |
| <hr/> <hr/>  | <hr/> <hr/>  | <hr/> <hr/>   |

Find similarities and differences in the Norwegian characters created.

*Finn likheter og ulikheter i de norske karakterene dere ha laget.*

| Similarities | Differences |
|--------------|-------------|
|              |             |

Find similarities and differences in the characters in the book.

*Finn likheter og ulikheter hos karakterene i boka.*

| Similarities | Differences |
|--------------|-------------|
|              |             |

Look at the families in the book, do all families look like this?

*Se på familien i boka, ser alle familier sånn ut?*

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Do all the families in the book have the same opportunities, why, why not?

*Har alle familien i boka samme muligheter, hvorfor, hvorfor ikke?*

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Ribaldo from Peru is starting in your class, how can you welcome him and include him in the classroom? You can write and draw.

*Ribaldo fra Peru starter i klassen din, hvordan kan du få han til å føle seg velkommen, og hvordan kan du inkludere han i klassen. Du kan skrive på engelsk og tegne.*

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Drawing to Ribaldo

*Tegning til Ribaldo*

Write down four words you connect to culture.

*Skriv ned fire ord som du knytter til kultur på engelsk.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_



# Appendix 3. Sikt approval



[Meldeskjema](#) / [Year 5 EFL pupils' understandings of the concept of culture before and...](#) / Vurdering

## Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

**Referansenummer**  
250245

**Vurderingstype**  
Standard

**Dato**  
02.01.2023

**Prosjekttittel**

Year 5 EFL pupils' understandings of the concept of culture before and after a critical literacy project

**Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Universitetet i Stavanger / Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk

**Prosjektansvarlig**

Cecilie Waallann Brown

**Student**

Linda Berenji

**Prosjektperiode**

29.11.2022 - 01.12.2023

**Kategorier personopplysninger**

Alminnelige

**Lovlig grunnlag**

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 01.12.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

**Kommentar**

**ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT**

Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are a student or a researcher. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation.

**COMMENTS ON THE DATA PROCESSING OR INFORMATION LETTER**

Parents/guardians will consent to the processing of personal data on behalf of their children. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

**FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES**

We have assessed that you have legal grounds to process the personal data, but remember that you must store, send and secure the collected data in accordance with your institution's guidelines. This means that you must use data processors (and the like) that your institution has an agreement with (i.e. cloud storage, online survey, and video conferencing providers).

Our assessment presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

**NOTIFY CHANGES**

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project, it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

**FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT**

We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

## Appendix 4. Consent form

### Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

#### *«5. klasse-elevs forståelse av begrepet kultur før og etter et kritisk litteraturprosjekt»*

Dette er en forespørsel til deg som foresatt om å la ditt barn delta i et forskningsprosjekt som har til hensikt å undersøke om 5. klasse-elever sin forståelse av begrepet kultur vil utvikle seg gjennom et kritisk litteraturprosjekt. Prosjektet innebærer at elever får undervisning om temaet kultur ved bruk av kritisk litteratur som vil inkludere en bildebok. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for barnet ditt.

#### **Formål**

Formålet med masterprosjektet er å få forskningsbasert kunnskap om elevens oppfatninger om begrepet kultur og om det kan utvikles gjennom et kritisk litteraturprosjekt. Å jobbe med kritisk litteratur går ut på å se på hvordan verden og samfunns relaterte temaer er representert i media, litteratur og lærebøker. I dette prosjektet vil elevene jobbe med temaet kultur gjennom en bildebok som viser livet til syv barn fra forskjellige land i verden. Mitt forskningsspørsmål er «utvikles elevenes forståelse av kultur som konsept gjennom en kritisk litteratur prosjekt, og i så fall på hvilke måter?».

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Dette er et forskningsprosjekt ved Universitetet i Stavanger og Linda Berenji (masterstudent) og Cecilie Waallann Brown (veileder) er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Du får denne forespørselen fordi du er foreldre/foresatte til et barn som går i 5. klasse på skolen der studien skal gjennomføres. Jeg (masterstudent Linda Berenji) jobber til vanlig som engelsklærer for 5. klasse og har valgt å samle inn data fra disse klassene da jeg har en god relasjon til elevene og kan koble prosjektet opp til den vanlige undervisningen.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Alle elevene i de aktuelle klassene vil delta i undervisningsdelen av prosjektet der kulturbegrepet vil bli jobbet med gjennom en kritisk tilnærming til litteratur. Undervisningen vil foregå i engelsktimene over en periode på to til tre uker og vil være knyttet til relevante kompetansemål innenfor engelsk. Data vil bare samles inn fra elever hvis foresatte har samtykket til det.

Dersom du velger å la barnet delta i forskningsprosjektet vil det innebære at jeg samler inn en eller flere av følgende data:

- **Elevarbeid produsert som en del av undervisningsopplegget.** Dette innebærer svar på spørsmål knyttet til temaet kultur og bildeboken.

- **Gruppeintervjuer før og etter prosjektet.** Gruppeintervjuene vil ta ca. 30 minutter og vil foregå under lesesiesta og litt av første time. Intervjuene vil bestå av spørsmål og oppgaver om elevenes forståelse av begrepet kultur og vil foregå på norsk. Lydopptak av intervjuene samt elevarbeid produsert under intervjuet vil samles inn.

Ta gjerne kontakt på forhånd dersom du ønsker å se intervjuguiden og oppgavene.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å la barnet ditt delta, kan du eller barnet selv når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle sine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for dem eller deres forhold til meg som lærer hvis de ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke seg.

Barnas deltakelse i undervisningen vil være den samme uavhengig om de deltar i forskningsprosjektet eller ikke.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om barnet til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Lydopptak vil bli tatt via diktafon som lagrer filene i Nettskjema som er Norges sikreste og mest brukte løsning for datainnsamling til forskning. Elevarbeid vil bli anonymisert og navn vil ikke bli skrevet ned. Deltakere vil kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen.

### **Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes 01.08.2023. Resultatene av prosjektet vil publiseres i en masteroppgave ved Universitetet i Stavanger og en presentasjon for lærere og andre ansatte ved samarbeidsskolen. Alle deltakerne anonymiseres, og det vil ikke være mulig å identifisere forskningsprosjektets deltakere i publiseringen. Det er kun Linda Berenji (masterstudent) og Cecilie Waallann Brown (veileder) som har tilgangen til datamaterialet. Data vil bli oppbevart uten personopplysninger for videre forskningsformål. Det elevene produserer på ark vil bli kastet og lydopptak vil bli slettet.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om barnet ditt basert på deres samtykke. På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Stavanger har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge barnet ditt kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har dere rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om dem, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om det som er feil eller misvisende

- å få slettet personopplysninger om dem
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av sine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Cecilie Waallann Brown (Veileder)  
Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora, Universitetet i Stavanger  
Tlf.: 51834574. E-post: cecilie.w.brown@uis.no

Linda Berenji (Masterstudent)  
Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora, Universitetet i Stavanger  
Tlf: 98866090. E-post: lindaberenji@gmail.com

Rolf Jegervatn (personvernombud)  
Universitetet i Stavanger  
Tlf.: 51831517. E-post: personvernombud@uis.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med: Personverntjenester på epost ([personverntjenester@sikt.no](mailto:personverntjenester@sikt.no)) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

*Cecilie Waallann Brown*  
(Veileder)

*Linda Berenji*  
(Forsker/ masterstudent)

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### **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «5. klasse-elever sin forståelse av begrepet kultur før og etter et kritisk litteratur-prosjekt», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. På vegne av \_\_\_\_\_ (navnet til barnet ditt) samtykker jeg at (sett kryss på den/de som gjelder):

- det kan samles inn elevarbeid produsert av eleven i forbindelse med undervisningsopplegget
- eleven kan delta i gruppeintervju før og etter undervisningsopplegget

Jeg samtykker til at opplysninger på vegne av barnet mitt behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av foresatte, dato)