

## **A lot on their plates; using Foodways to Develop Intercultural Competence in Norwegian schools**

A mixed-method approach, targeting the teaching of culture and intercultural competence in the subject of English in Norwegian Lower Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

This thesis studies how culture is taught in the subject of English in lower secondary schools, focusing on how culture instruction may enhance intercultural competence. As part of this investigation, this thesis examines how foodways can work as a topic to develop language learners' intercultural competence. This topic was motivated by the increasing importance of intercultural competence in a globalized world. One needs to learn to respect one another, learn from one another, and try to steer away from prejudice in favor of raising acceptance. As an everyday topic, accessible to younger students, foodways suggested itself as a site to investigate the role of cultural instruction in developing intercultural competence.

The first aim of the study was to find data about what lower secondary students know about the foodways of British and American schoolchildren. The second objective focused on second language (L2) teachers investigating how they define "intercultural competence," and how they teach culture. The third objective studied whether teaching about foodways to L2 students can help promote intercultural competence. To investigate these objectives, a Norwegian English classroom was used as a case, and the project consisted of an intervention and an interview. An additional survey added depth to the data.

The findings indicate that students' knowledge about English-speaking schoolchildren is largely influenced by social media and series/movies. Another finding is that teachers seem to have quite a bit of knowledge about topics of culture and intercultural competence, but lack a common understanding of the terms, associated with it. It is also unclear where or how they have acquired their understanding of what defines culture instruction in the school. The results of this thesis suggest that foodways can be used to teach intercultural competence in schools.

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## 1 Introduction

Intercultural understanding is a crucial part of contemporary life. Most of us know this instinctively, but scholarly research backs up the importance of understanding different cultures in education. Byram and Kramsch are two of the central researchers within the field of culture in foreign language teaching. Their work became essential in the 1990s when the increased implementation of culture into foreign language teaching became widespread in Europe. The two have continued their research and have influenced a number of other scholars like Risager and Deardorff, who now publish in the field. They both comment on Kramsch and Byram's work and have developed their individual projects concerning intercultural competence and culture pedagogy. Within Norway, an increasing number of MA and Ph.D. theses provide a more concrete picture of culture within English language instruction. Some of the literature presented in this study are of particular interest because their studies concern Norwegian practices of culture teaching.

In Skaugen (2020), I found the words that have inspired this project. This paragraph motivated me to explore what the term culture means in the Norwegian education system, how it is taught, and how we can expand students' ability to understand children and young people in other countries. Errors found in the original text are retained here. Skaugen (2020) writes that:

In a time where xenophobia and prejudices are part of the political picture, respect and understanding of different people's cultures, intercultural competence and moving perspective is more important than ever. It is vital to empower students to develop understanding of how ethnocentrism can be a dangerous path and that different cultures can have completely different opinions on a subject without discrediting one another. Encouraging students to be willing to make an effort to understand each other across cultural backgrounds and discuss on the basis of mutual respect, is significant. (Skaugen, 2020, p. 1)

Here, Skaugen conveys the importance of intercultural competence within the educational system and in the culture in general. The subject of English is a natural arena to learn about different cultures. Talking about these differences and learning to understand how other people are so different from us, and yet so similar is an integral part of gaining intercultural competence. Students should be encouraged to see that there are different perspectives on life, different ways of doing things and that our way is not always the only correct way. Learning

about other cultures and gaining a wider perspective will lead to mutual respect across cultures.

This thesis will discuss how the subject of English is contributing to intercultural understanding. Communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities are all features of intercultural understanding, and learning a foreign language can contribute to these five C's (Troyan, 2012). Language subjects are not just about learning grammar and facts about other countries, but also learning about countries, cultures, and the people who live there. This includes learning how to include, talk to and about other people in a better way. I would also argue that learning a language should help students accept differences and empathize with others.

As a concrete focus, this thesis looks at the everyday practice of eating a school lunch. It discusses how foodways can be a topic that can raise awareness of different cultural practices. Foodways became the selected topic because it is easy for the students to relate to and discuss, contains practical vocabulary, and represents the everyday culture of students. Additionally, since school lunch is something the different cultures have in common, but where specific practices differ, it makes it easy to compare and look for similarities and differences between cultures. In short, as a part of "everyday culture," food is a suitable topic to discuss cultural differences in a way that makes sense to young learners.

Almerico (2014) argues that "food studies looks at people's relationships with food and reveals an abundance of information about them. Food choices expose a group or a person's beliefs, passions, background knowledge, assumptions and personalities" (p. 4). He points to some of the central parts of everyday culture, attitudes, beliefs, personalities, and how food studies will lead to a better understanding of these central parts (Almerico, 2014). The results of a 1995 (Steim) experiment clearly indicate that people judge others based on what they eat, demonstrating the importance of food to our attitudes towards other people and other cultures. König (2017) found that the students described as popular were the ones who were perceived to eat healthy food, and the unpopular were perceived to eat unhealthily. Food is thus tied tightly to our moral judgments of others and is a useful tool to investigate intercultural understanding and attitudes towards other individuals and cultures.

The thesis aims to find answers to the three following research questions regarding intercultural competence and its role in the Norwegian classroom within the subject of English.

- 1) What do students know about the foodways of British and American schoolchildren?



- 2) How do second language (L2) teachers define "intercultural competence," and how do they teach culture?
- 3) Can teaching about foodways to L2 students help promote their intercultural competence?

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 English in the Norwegian school system

#### 2.1.1 The subject renewal (LK20)

The Subject Renewal (LK 20) is the Norwegian national curriculum and the basis for all teaching in Norway. It is built on principles that aim at ensuring equal schooling for all. The curriculum contains five sections: the core curriculum, the purpose of the education, core values for education and training, principles for education and all-round development, and principles for the school's practice (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). The targeted subjects consist of competence aims, core elements, interdisciplinary topics, basic skills, and a description of central values and relevance of the subject (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Each subject contains competence aims after year 2, 4, 7, and 10 and the end of upper secondary school (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). They are meant to secure a certain learning outcome and development for all students in Norwegian schools, describing what students should learn throughout the different years. The respective years' competence aims often build on the previous ones, enabling the students to build on prior knowledge to reach another developmental level, like Piaget's theory. The idea is to create a progression by adapting the competence aims to a more advanced level by building on previous knowledge. The basic skills, interdisciplinary topics, core elements, and the variety of competence aims are elements of LK20 that work as pillars in lesson planning.

Taking a look at the curriculum for English, it is expected that the students learn a lot during their schooling. During 12 (vocational) and 13 (general studies) years of education, the students will have had a total of 728 hours of English. During lower secondary school, which are the targeted grades for this study. English is taught for 222 hours, divided on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). It is possible that the English subject should be taught even more frequently, considering how important the English language, and language in general, have become in our global society. Within these years, students are expected to learn the English language, English-language literature, and gain an idea about the cultures present in English-speaking countries.

## 2.2 Intercultural competence (IC)

### 2.2.1 Michael Byram

Slightly underexpressed in the curriculum, is the underlying necessity to gain intercultural competence as a part of language study. There is a difference between what is usually defined as cultural competence and intercultural competence. Byram (2013) explains that cultural competence relates to a one-way relationship of learning about one or several cultures. On the contrary, intercultural competence requires a mutual relationship between the target culture and your own. Constant awareness of everything between “us” and “them,” drawing on comparisons and contrasts, gives a broader understanding of the complexity of cultures. In other words, intercultural competence can be explained as “the ability to see ourselves as others see us,” which requires insight and critical thinking (Byram, 2013, p. 4). Having these thoughts in mind, it is necessary to explain what intercultural competence should include. One of the implications of language teaching is intercultural communicative competence, meaning that learners should be taught grammar and linguistics and, equally important, learn skills, awareness, attitudes, and values to gain more profound knowledge about the targeted cultures or countries (Byram, 1997). These components work together to form intercultural competence and should, therefore, not be seen individually (Lund, 2012). Intercultural attitudes will enhance learners’ openness to new cultures, create curiosity, and make one decenter own beliefs, values, and behaviors (Byram et al., 2002).

Knowledge is another factor in intercultural competence. One needs knowledge about how different identities and social groups function and their practices. This contributes to meaningful interaction with different types of people (Byram et al., 2002). The next factor is developing skills. It is crucial to develop skills in relating, comparing, and interpreting cultures. Equally important is developing skills of interaction and discovery (Byram et al., 2002). The last factor is critical cultural awareness, the ability to explicitly and consciously evaluate your response by being aware of others’ values and beliefs (Byram et al., 2002). In other words, it has to do with being respectful of the interlocutors.

### 2.2.2 Claire Kramsch

Kramsch is another scholar who researches intercultural competence and has a particular focus on how it should be taught. She divides culture into two aspects, “big C” culture and “little c” culture (2013). This corresponds roughly to the traditional distinction between high culture and everyday culture. While “big C” culture (high-culture) aims toward

the visible and often seen as intellectual, artistic achievements, like literature, history, and art, “little c” culture targets the concepts of everyday practices that can represent different ways of interpreting the world. Munden & Sandhaug (2017) explains that “little c” culture has to do with “collective behavior and shared ways of understanding the world” (p. 357). “Little c” culture contains what has to do with everything from birthday and marriage celebrations, how people behave in queues, what type of humor people have, and what kind of relationship people have to the natural world (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017).

According to Kramersch (2013), the teaching of culture should balance between “on the one hand, identify, explain, classify and categorize events and people according to modern objective criteria” (p. 72). On the other hand, teaching culture considers individual subjectivities and the “historicities of living speakers and writers who occupy changing subject positions in a decentered, globalized world” (Kramersch, 2013, p. 72). This idea strengthens the notion that cultural competence should include knowledge, understanding, values, and attitudes at both the societal and individual level. Knowledge is often best conveyed through objective information, while understanding, attitudes, and values, on the other hand, are best learned through subjectivities and the histories of people alive today. This master’s project finds Kramersch’s distinction useful. Her theories inspired the ideas and the methods behind the intervention, which aims to develop the students’ intercultural competence rather than fill them with more information.

Kramersch values the idea of teaching students to become interculturally competent rather than teaching about culture, highlighting how important it is to learn and be aware of one’s own culture before learning about new ones. She argues that a deeper understanding of the self (self-awareness) is a dependent factor in understanding other cultures (Kramersch, 2013). Deardorff (2009) also suggests that awareness is the key factor to gaining intercultural competence and that after awareness, knowledge follows. Kramersch (2013) suggests that when a person acquires a new language, one filters new knowledge through the competence one already has. For Kramersch (2013) understanding the other occurs through understanding the experiences that made you who you are. Kramersch (2013) also argues that we learn more about who we are in encounter with others, and Deardorff (2009) believes that intercultural interaction also enhances competence and mutual adaptation.

At this point, an important theoretical concept is perhaps helpful. Transgredience is a relevant term coined by the scholar Bakhtin which helps understand the process of developing intercultural competence (Holquist, 1990). The term means to see oneself from an outside perspective, a skill that develops through learning another language and by reflecting on own

experiences (Holquist, 1990). This skill leads the learners into a position that Kramersch calls “the third place,” which means simultaneously seeing oneself from an inside and outside perspective (Kramersch, 1993; Kramersch, 2013; Li, 2009). The term refers to a way of thinking that goes beyond usual dichotomies between source and target culture to create a place where the two cultures interact (Li, 2004). According to Kramersch, reaching the third place is a big step toward developing intercultural competence (Kramersch, 2011).

## 2.3 Culture in the classroom

### 2.3.1 Foreign and second language teaching

In Norway, we tend to refer to English as a second language (ESL), not a foreign language (FL), because it is taught from the first year of elementary school, and Norwegians are exposed to English through social media, series/movies or direct contact with English speakers in social or professional contexts. However, Risager (2007) argues that English should be considered a foreign language because it is a language spoken in countries other than where the teaching takes place. Whether it’s a question of first, second, foreign, or a heritage language, Risager (2007) points out that both social and cultural practices should be included in the teaching of English, adding that every person, in a sense, is a cultural, linguistic, and social citizen. This would mean that if one of these components were left out, the person would have problems communicating effectively. Most people are built with a set of social, linguistic, and cultural skills, but they need to be developed to become good mediators.

According to Risager (2007), “intercultural learning” did not become a focus until the 1990s, when language and culture pedagogy united. The 1990s were characterized by internationalization, a development from the 70s and 80s when the communicative approach was the leading approach to culture teaching. This communicative approach mainly focused on linguistic communication, but there was a common understanding that it was best learned through meaningful context (Risager, 2007). It is worth noticing that language teaching until the 90s valued the linguistic component alone, believing that speaking the language grammatically correct was the key to learning a new language.

In the 90s, people started to exchange views more widely with others around the world through the widespread availability of communication media. Study and exchange programs became more popular, and the internet for commercial and personal use became more accessible (Risager, 2007). All these factors were beneficial for language teaching. More possibilities for traveling made transnational personal contact more accessible. Students had a

greater chance of meeting people from other countries, which again led to a pedagogy of teaching culture more oriented towards personal cultural encounters and experienced culture (Risager, 2007). Furthermore, in the 90s cultural awareness became an objective for learning. Byram & Zarate (Byram et al., 1997) developed a model of the intercultural speaker, and Kramersch fronted culture from a linguistic point of view.

Today, we know that language learning is more than just grammar and vocabulary. Language learning also requires social and cultural insight and awareness of our own and other cultures.

### 2.3.2 Culture pedagogy

One particular interest within culture pedagogy is teaching about the social and cultural conditions in the target language countries, using different themes, methods, and texts that can help develop the students' intercultural competence (Risager, 2007). Risager explains culture pedagogy as:

a more holistic view of language learning, as it has been interested in man not only as a language learner but as someone who also develops other facets of the personality in connection with language learning – especially a greater knowledge and understanding of the world. (Risager, 2007, p. 9)

The shift in culture teaching over the last 30-35 years has promoted this interest and caused some practical changes in how to teach culture. These changes in practice involve a greater focus on promoting the students' learning processes, developing consciousness and personal connections with the targeted cultures, and seeing them in relation to their own cultural background (Risager, 2007).

One example of this is how the curriculum in Norway has changed over these years. Whereas the prominent focus in Reform 97 (L97), an old National curriculum was “big C” culture, rather than “little c” culture, which was more emphasized in The Knowledge Promotion (LK06) (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017), and now also in the newly published curriculum, The Subject Renewal (LK20). However, the competence aims in LK20 are different from the ones in LK06 in that they are more open for interpretation, and where the competence aims are fewer and less concrete than in LK06. The change from the L97 until LK20 has put emphasis on reflection, comparing cultures, and understanding and developing the intercultural speaker (Risager, 2007). The intercultural speaker is a person who can exchange and mediate meaning between languages and cultures (Scarino, 2021; Risager, 2007) and implicitly, this is what the new curriculum hopes to develop. Learning “little c”

culture, through working with developing skills, attitudes, awareness, and knowledge, the student will hopefully acquire tolerance, understanding, and a genuine appreciation of the “other” (Fantini, 1995).

Another part of culture pedagogy is learning to communicate effectively within meaningful contexts in the target language (Risager, 2007). From a sociolinguistic perspective, Risager (2007) argues that this practical linguistic skill is best developed when combined with meaningful context. Kramsch (1998) explains that an intercultural speaker is characterized as having the ability to adjust the language to the situation, using appropriate and accurate language. In fact, Kramsch believes that this should be the primary goal of language learning. Risager’s arguments regarding culture pedagogy support Byram and Kramsch’s models by realizing that competence does not come from linguistic skills alone but by building awareness and knowledge about different cultures and abilities (2007).

Kramsch and Byram have two different models explaining the intercultural speaker that are of relevance here. Byram’s model views language learning as interactive, meaningful, and communicative processes that will help the intercultural speaker establish and maintain relationships across cultural boundaries (Byram, 1997). Furthermore, the model describes that sets of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness are essential factors to becoming successful intercultural speakers (Byram, 1997). Kramsch (2013), on the other hand, conveys the importance of teaching culture through valuable contexts, through interaction with others. She also values self-awareness and the so-called “third place” when reflecting on different cultures (Kramsch, 1993; 2013; Li & Cook, 2009). Kramsch (2013) believes that being aware of one’s own culture is crucial to understanding other cultures. The benefit is that we become more aware of our own through learning about different cultures. Byram and Kramsch’s theories do not have the same focus on how to become intercultural competent communicators, but they are not contradictions. Risager (2007) believes that combining the two in a new model would be most beneficial, and we see how the Norwegian curriculum hopes to do just that.

### 2.3.3 How foodways relates to intercultural competence

Part of this project is to examine how “little c” culture is understood in Norwegian schools. This project examines the understanding of foodways in English-speaking countries as a way to gauge what students know about the everyday lives of children like themselves and how teachers typically approach the teaching of “little c” culture. Foodways is a term that can be defined as “customs, beliefs, and practices surrounding the production, presentation,

and consumption of food” or “the intersection of food and culture” (Edge et al., 2013, p.100). Although preparing and consuming target-country food is standard practice in many language classes, there is little research into how learning food cultures might help students gain a greater appreciation for the “little c” cultures of the countries where the language they study is used.

In this section, I will present some arguments for why the topic of food can be used in culture teaching and, more specifically, to enhance intercultural competence. As pointed out previously in the theory section, intercultural understanding and, gaining new perspectives, being curious about other cultures are essential objectives in the curriculum for the subject of English.

Deardorff (2009) argues that teachers should be aware that intercultural competence shouldn't be taught nor assessed as separable learning objectives but be integral to all objectives in the classroom. She also points out that simplification is a key factor in didactics, using common topics to address specific objectives, where there is room for discovering and understanding the other. Choosing school lunch as a topic for teaching, targeting the development of intercultural competence, simplifies a large and complex term, as Deardorff (2009) explains, not to teach nor assess as a separable learning object but as be integral in all objectives.

The topic of foodways can give the students room to discover and understand the “other” and become more aware of their own culture. Edge (2013) also explains that “food is closely related to the sociological subfield of religion, culture, and race/ethnicity.” and that the culture of food is a form of communication, just like a language (p. 100). Therefore, school lunch is a relevant topic within culture in a language subject, allowing younger students a way to access and understand cultural differences. Caffee and Lucy's (2018) study provided some good arguments to how teaching foodways can contribute to intercultural competencies, and three of them will be addressed below.

The first argument for using foodways to contribute to intercultural competencies is that “the common source of food can bring people together in ways that encourage lifelong learning and a passion for intercultural exchange” (Caffee & Lucey, 2018, p.50). Whether it is talking about or eating food together, food is something that everybody can discuss, chat about, and learn about. One can, for instance, learn; how to cook, different ways to cook, what people eat, how people eat, what food is typical for different types of people, or expand our repertoire of things we like or dislike. These things are likely also to promote engagement or passion for other cultures.

Because food production and consumption are everyday events, foodways is a great way for students to really learn and memorize language features. The second argument from Caffee & Lucey (2018) explains that

Food can serve as a point of common interest for students from a variety of backgrounds, and it holds particular appeal in the foreign language classroom, where topics of food preparation and consumption can help L2 learners internalize vocabulary and grammatical structures early on in their learning. (p.51)

Thus the topic of foodways belongs in the second language classroom because of how it can help L2 learners learn vocabulary and grammatical structures in different stages of their learning. In this way, food can teach culture, intercultural competences, and language at the same time.

The third argument from Caffee & Lucey (2018) that I would like to address is that “the academic discipline of foodways itself encourages critical thinking about the production and consumption of food in ways that can foster meaningful discussions between learners” (p. 51). Critical thinking is one of the core values in the curriculum. It is a skill that, along with ethical awareness, should be taught in all subjects to educate the students to make sound judgments (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). Food is not a neutral subject, but involves environmental issues, religious and immigration issues, and discussions about class and poverty. It thus engages with issues that require students to think critically and to reflect upon their own position in the world.

Parts of this master’s project aim to see whether foodways as a topic within a specific teaching intervention can help develop the targeted student groups’ intercultural competence. These recently mentioned arguments give meaningful examples of what the intervention may contribute to regarding the desired development. The aim throughout the intervention was that the students would acquire not just knowledge about food, but also be challenged to reflect on their prejudices, their own food practices (self-awareness), and to interrogate what they really know about the US, Britain, and themselves. Another aim was to engage the students in learning about different cultures, teach them practical vocabulary and good language habits.

School lunch is also a topic that lower secondary students can closely relate to. First, because most people eat lunch, and second, the students are likely to have seen or heard something about the way British and American lunch breaks. Individuals often learn stereotypes that are not likely to represent the whole culture. Stereotypes are often simplifications of a more complex reality. Food is an easy topic to talk about, and the



traditions vary considerably between cultures. Maybe students follow teen shows or have seen movies that give them an idea about what students in other cultures or countries eat. Recently, TikTok has been a significant source of influence, and from personal experience, students often draw considerable knowledge from there as well. However, one crucial factor is that the impact of social media might lead to more stereotypes. The teachers' job is to teach the students to see that the culture is more diverse than what is sometimes presented, but as Kramsch (2013) said, being aware of ourselves is a dependent factor in how we can understand others.

#### 2.4 Previous research

This section will give examples of previous research targeting two of this thesis's important topics: intercultural competence in the classroom and children's reflections on foodways. Some of the targeted articles from published studies, and others, previous master's theses focusing on intercultural competence within English as a second language (ESL) classroom in Norway. The MA theses were included because of the paucity of published research on this topic in the context of Norwegian foreign-language (FL) instruction.

In her article, Lund (2012) examines what communication across cultures means and how teachers can better facilitate understanding and respect for diversity. Referring to Bøhn and Dypedahl (2009), she explains intercultural competence as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds. Lund (2012) argues that this competence may be as relevant in the local areas and close relations as international relations. In this article, she looked at how the textbooks of L97 and LK06 encourage intercultural competence by analyzing the texts and tasks in the textbook according to the three competencies: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The conclusion points out how intercultural competence in the subject of English is even more substantial as the language's role as a lingua franca becomes greater. Even though this article is based on the LK06 and L97, Lund (2012) sees that the textbooks increasingly focus on intercultural competence. She notices that the books, to a greater extent, challenge the learners to reflect on and question some global issues and controversial topics. Additionally, the students are introduced to different conventions of use of language, behaviors, and how it is used differently in different types of contexts (Lund, 2012). However, Lund (2012) problematizes the sporadic appearance of this content, and argues that often, the information is somehow random and lacking. Therefore, she believes that a new curriculum (which has arrived since the publication of her article) has the potential to systematically raise

more examples of cultural differences and variations of language use in classes and thus to give a satisfying result based on intercultural competence (Lund, 2012).

Jørgensen (2011) wrote her master's thesis, investigating how cultural aspects are presented in one specific textbook series, namely *New Flight*. This textbook series consists of three books for use in lower secondary school according to the previous curriculum from 2006 (LK06). Jørgensen (2011) targeted the texts and follow-up questions from the books and analyzed them according to three key principles of culture teaching that she chose to call: "traditional culture teaching, intercultural communicative competence, and 'place of struggle'" (Jørgensen, 2011, p. 17). These categories were carefully selected with support from Kramsch and Byram's theories.

Jørgensen (2011) refers to Lund's (2007) Ph. D, textbook analysis of several textbook series used for lower secondary, according to L97, which also targets culture. One of the findings of her study was that the textbooks dealt with all the three approaches to culture that she measured (Jørgensen, 2011). However, the traditional way of teaching culture was the most dominant. Kramsch (1993) explains that "this view of culture has favored facts over meanings and has not enabled learners to understand foreign attitudes, values, and mindsets" (p.24). Therefore, Jørgensen (2011) argues that the learning outcomes largely depends on the teachers' intercultural focus, and the texts provided in the textbook are dealt with in different ways, hence they may give different learning outcomes.

Two recent master's theses looked at how culture is taught in English classrooms in Norway but from slightly different perspectives. Listuen (2017) aimed towards finding what characterized the teaching of culture in 9<sup>th</sup>-grade Norwegian classrooms in the subject of English. Skaugen (2020), on the other hand, intended to investigate the development of intercultural competence in the teaching of English in Norwegian classrooms by looking at how teachers incorporate the development of intercultural competence into their teaching.

Listuen (2017) videotaped recordings of two English lessons and did some interviews with the teachers. The analyzed video recordings and the teacher interviews provided information about what occurred. She could find that the teaching was mainly concerned with "big C" culture (Listuen, 2017). The learning objectives Listuen (2017) observed were based on general knowledge, but communicative skills and understanding different lifestyles were also mentioned. The last finding was that the classes were greatly based on the students' acquired knowledge, student talking time, and accurate explanations. She found that the main difference between the two schools was their focus on conceptual understanding and the dialogue between the teacher and the students. Based on her findings Listuen (2017) suggests

that the development of attitudes and skills should be taught more, in addition to knowledge for building intercultural competent students (Byram et al., 2002).

Skaugen (2020) used Deardorff's model to outline her analysis of the observed classroom interventions, focusing on attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Deardorff's intercultural competence model coincides largely with the components of Byram's model. Skaugen (2020) chose an observation-based qualitative research design to answer her research question. Her data is based on a qualitative case study on video observations of teachers' classroom practices. Although the research only investigates three different classroom practices, it may slightly imply how intercultural competence is taught in schools. The findings show that knowledge and skills were taught, but attitudes were not taught frequently or explicitly. Skaugen, based on Deardorff (2006) and other scholars' theories, concludes that this result might impair the development of intercultural competence.

The previous research theory agrees that knowledge, skill, and attitudes are essential parts of developing intercultural competence (Byram et al., 2002). This current master's thesis also investigates how food can be used as a concrete topic to enhance 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students' intercultural competence. Johansson et al. (2009) studied Nordic children's reflections in encounters with different types of food. Children from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland participated in the research. They took pictures of their "foodscapes," including home, school, cafés, restaurants, shops, and street food. There were two main themes, healthy/unhealthy food and every day/festive/favorite food. The kids reflected over and gave clear answers to what was healthy and unhealthy food and why. They described fiber-rich food as healthy and sugary, fatty, and salty food as unhealthy. Additionally, they divided the different types of food into the other categories in the second theme (everyday, festive, and favorite food). In many cases, the unhealthy food was the children's favorite food, and everyday food was healthy. The study was interesting because it grasped some of the theoretical complexity of the children's life from a food perspective.

There is a clear pattern in these Scandinavian studies revealing how intercultural competence has been taught in contemporary schools. A knowledge-based approach seems to dominate in the teaching of culture in Norway. This emphasis on knowledge rather than skills and attitudes represents a move towards an abstract understanding of culture, which is often confined to knowledge of "Big C" cultural artifacts. There can be many reasons why skills and attitudes are left out of cultural instruction. This may be due to lack of knowledge on the topic, the teachers do not feel like they have sufficient time to go in-depth, or they are not provided with enough material in modern textbooks.

The majority of these studies mentioned in this section investigate precisely this issue – the increasingly theoretical teaching of culture in schools. Through these examples, we can see that teachers need more knowledge about intercultural competence and how it can be conveyed to the students in class. Preventing prejudice and learning mutual respect for cultural diversity takes more than just knowledge; it requires a deeper understanding of different cultures and a deep understanding and awareness of why and how people are different. Developing understanding through concrete skills and attitudinal awareness potentially makes it easier to respect the difference.

Johansson et al. (2009) demonstrate that 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students from the Nordic countries have some understanding and vocabulary about the food they eat and what people in other countries eat. In my intervention, I hoped to use this knowledge about food cultures and link it to a more significant issue about the lived experiences of children in English-speaking countries. This project thus wanted to see what 8<sup>th</sup> graders think about these lived experiences in the service of expanding their intercultural awareness and understanding of other people.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Choice of method**

Through this master's thesis, I want to gain some understanding of how culture can be favorably taught through the subject of English and how culture is taught in Norwegian classrooms of English today. To achieve this goal, it is relevant to look at both teachers' perspectives and practices and directly into how and what we can teach to develop intercultural learning processes. I will investigate this using a mixed-method approach, combining a case study and a survey. The case study (intervention and a semi-structured interview) will provide a small in-depth data set. The survey will provide broader and more generalizable answers that can provide a way to analyze the case study results.

The case study consists of a teaching intervention and an interview. The intervention consisted of two groups of 15 and 16, 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students participating in an American and British school lunch project. The project went over four classes, conducted in both groups, each class of 60 minutes. It consisted of a pre - and post-test and an additional class learning about the American and British school lunch practices through authentic material, which is real language material produced by native speakers to convey some message to an audience (Gilmore, 2007). Additionally, the project involved making comparisons between the two target countries and their own, the Norwegian school lunch. Comparisons were used as a

method to teach what Kramersch (2013) says, one needs to be aware of our own culture to understand those of the others. In addition to the intervention, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the classes' teacher about her beliefs and practices connected to her teaching of culture in the English classroom.

Some of the interview questions were also converted into a survey targeting English teachers teaching 5-10th grade. The idea was to collect a broader sample of information and see if it's possible to make some generalizations on teachers' beliefs and practices attached to their teaching of culture. The survey had 176 respondents, consisting of 5-10<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers from all over Norway. The survey and the case study method make this research a combination of qualitative and quantitative data and is therefore called a mixed-method approach.

I believe this approach will give my project the most valid and reliable result. The qualitative data provides in-depth information for reflection and interpretation. The qualitative data builds support around the same topic where a broader sample of teachers can be targeted, rather than just one. I expect that some findings from the survey will be related to results from the teacher interview. It is also likely that the interview and survey in some way contain relevant data about interpretations from the intervention, which would make my reflections stronger. I also hope to find some correlation between teachers' practices and attitudes and the students' intercultural competence. Part of the intervention will also be analyzed according to which part worked well - enhancing the students' learning outcome and what could have been done differently.

In the following, I will explain in more detail the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research designs related to this respective master's thesis.

### 3.1.1 Qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research values individual meanings and tries to emphasize and render the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2014). Postholm (2018) points at some of the characteristics of this research method, saying that "qualitative research methods are first and foremost focused on collecting data that can be described and be interpreted, aiming towards understanding people's actions or opinions in natural contexts" (p. 113, [own translation]). This method contributes with in-depth information about either people, organizations, or phenomena, which is not likely to be measured with statistical measurements. On the other hand, the quantitative research method is "a range of methods concerned with the systematic investigation of social phenomena, using statistical or numerical data" (Watson, 2015, p. 1).

The quantitative method characterizes the testing of theories in a deductive manner. Additionally, quantitative research reduces bias connected to subjectivity and makes studies more easily replicable than qualitative research, and the findings are more likely to provide generalizable claims (Creswell, 2014). However, this thesis's research questions could not be answered thoroughly using only one of these approaches alone, so a mixed-method approach is targeted.

### 3.1.2 Mixed-methods

A mixed-method approach is research mixing or combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques, approaches, methods, concepts, or language into a single study (Johnson, 2004). Therefore, the present thesis uses the mixed-method approach that allows the use of both surveys, intervention, and interview research. The goal of combining the two research techniques is to provide a more holistic picture of the investigated topic of research. One of the benefits of doing mixed-method research is that it may strengthen the researcher's claim (Creswell, 2011). This benefit rests on the researcher's justification of the claim from both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints (Wilkinson, 2019; Bryman, 2008). This thesis implies that they need to be justified from the case study and the survey's point of view to state claims. Lack of justification from the different viewpoints will make the claims less reliable. Mixed-method research attempts to integrate the use of both two methodologies into a single study to provide a better understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2011). One of the limitations of using mixed method research is the lack of integrity between the two methods dealing with the data to answer their research question. It frequently happens that the researcher deal with the quantitative and qualitative data separately in relation to their research questions instead of purposefully integrating them across the study (Truscott et al., 2010; Wilkinson, 2019).

As explained, mixed methods research has the characteristics of contributing to sound and valid research. However, it requires the researchers' attention not to fall into the possible pitfalls. Even though one needs to prepare interviews and surveys carefully to collect the relevant data for the targeted research, they are easy to extract data from. An intervention is less concrete and based on interpretations of own experiences, observations, and reflections. The validity of this research rests on how well described the situations and findings from the intervention are and how well the results can be grounded in theory. The possibility of bias will also reduce if the data is presented and explained carefully and objectively. Even though observations may be described neutrally, the necessary experiences and interpretations from

the interview and particularly the intervention may always include some bias attached to the researcher's subjectivity and its values and attitudes toward the current topic.

### 3.2 Case study

Flyvbjerg (2006) explains a case study as an approach to examine a case's (practice, experience, phenomenon, or an institution) impact on a targeted group of individuals or an individual (Merriam, 2002) through the use of thick description to describe the particular case in detail. Merriam describes a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 2002, p. 8; Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) states that because of how the case study values the complexity of the particular case, it is a valuable method for classroom settings (Mallette & Duke, 2021), which is one of the reasons that makes this approach suitable for the present research. Additionally, the case study seeks to "investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life," especially since "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). In other words, this present case study aims toward collecting in-depth information from an intervention and an interview, which represent the phenomenon and the context in which it occurred.

A unique trait of case study research is that it can proceed through various tools such as observation, documents, field notes, interviews, or artifacts (Mallette & Duke, 2021). For this case study research, a classroom Intervention and an interview are the two chosen tools to acquire empirical data. A case study is an inductive approach, which means that the data analysis will be grounded in the findings rather than in theory (Mallette & Duke, 2021). This means that the findings from a qualitative study often present micro-level perspectives and the researcher attempts to interpret a phenomenon to recognize and explain relevant macro forces (Mallette & Duke, 2021). The research of a case study is based on and requires subjective interpretations of the findings, which may be seen as one of the limitations of this method due to the bias this may cause (Atkinson & Hammersly, 1998; Mallette & Duke, 2021).

#### 3.2.1 The intervention

The intervention aims to investigate students' intercultural competence based on the four components: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness, supported by Byram et al. (1997) and Deardorff (2009). The initial plan was to play out the intervention at a higher grade level (9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade). Still, since the university could not offer older students in cooperation with LU schools (teacher education schools), I adjusted and simplified the

content of the intervention. The topic of the intervention was school lunches in Britain and America, compared with Norwegian school lunches, and the aim was to raise awareness and knowledge and observe the development of their attitudes and skills. Other cultures could also have been included if different cultures were represented in the classrooms and if there was more time. Adding more cultural examples would make the students more aware of how and why cultures are different and similar to one another.

The intervention consists of explicit information from a high school in Minnesota, USA, conveyed through an interview with some of their students, recorded for this intervention, a lunch calendar showing what was served in their cafeterias that month, and some of the coming months, and some practical information about the cost of eating at school. Presenting the British school lunch, I did not have access to as much authentic material. Still, food calendars were found with some additional information about pricing and some small extracts from British students describing what they ate for lunch and why. The examples given in the intervention, both about USA and Britain, were not meant to be absolute representative of the two countries but an illustration of how school lunch is likely to be practiced somewhere within the countries. The material made room for contrasting the two countries, not least with Norway. Norway is significantly the culture with the most different practice from both US and Britain. The two of them (US and Britain), also have some differences, but also many similarities. An example of this is that students in both Britain and America are served/offered a hot meal from their cafeteria during their lunch break, while in it is more normal either to bring or buy some bread with any type of “pålegg” (topping).

#### *3.2.1.1 The participants*

The intervention was 2 x 4(60min) hours, which means I taught two different classes of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, each of them for four hours. Which school and grade I got to have the intervention for was arranged between the University and the LU schools. I was given the choice of doing the intervention in two 8<sup>th</sup>-grade classrooms instead of one. Having the intervention for two classes made it possible to retrieve more data. The two classes consisted of 15 and 16 students. The two class' teacher was my contact person, and she was both class's English teacher. Preferably, I would like to observe the classes in one or two classes prior to the intervention to be introduced, become familiar with the groups, and explain the project.



### 3.2.2 The interview

The interview is a qualitative method characterized by rigor, credible, and reliable data (Kitto, 2008). Interviews are the most common data collection method (Taylor, 2005), whereas the semi-structured interview is one of the most common methods within qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom, 2006). In this thesis, the interview works as a tool within a case study, not as an individual method. It was one 18 minutes long, semi-structured interview. The informant was the intervention classes' English teacher. The interview was a mix between the teacher's beliefs, attitudes, and practices about teaching culture and intercultural competence in the classroom and observations and comments regarding the completed interventions.

### 3.3 The survey

A survey characterizes a method to retrieve systematic information about a target group's particular traits (Mallette & Duke, 2021). Structured surveys contribute to research with inferential or descriptive statistics, which in some cases can provide statistical generalizations based on the data (Mallette & Duke, 2021).

The survey for this project was conducted through survey exact and was shared on some teacher forums on Facebook, "Undervisningsopplegg for ungdomstrinnet" and "Engelsklærere." The aim was to collect information about attitudes and beliefs related to intercultural competence and the role of culture in the classroom, and what characterized their teaching of culture. This quantitative method contributed with numerical data that supported findings from the interview. Another fact is that the survey provided a more significant variation of responses than the one teacher interview.

The survey was designed so that I could compare the teacher interview to the survey to see certain co-relations between them. Also, an aim was to investigate the teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching culture. In total, 176 5-10<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers responded to the survey; however, some fully completed, and some only partially completed.

### 3.4 Reliability

Watson (2015) defines that "reliability is the extent to which an instrument makes the same measurement each time it is used" (p. 3). The qualitative approaches used in this research will be challenging to reproduce with the exact measurements due to the unique and complex classroom atmosphere. Classroom situations will never be forced or fully replicated, and utterances will not be identical (Brevik, 2015).

To strengthen the reliability of the intervention, the class's teacher was an additional observer. This was planned prior to the intervention started, and therefore, most of the time during the intervention there was more than one observer, something which is argued by Tellis to enhance the reliability of a case study (1997). In the second part of the semi-structured interview with the teacher, we discussed the observations we had made during the intervention.

The interview and the survey are the two methods from this study that are easier to replicate. To this study there is an attached appendix with an interview guide and the survey questions and their answer options. This overview gives a clear picture of which data is collected. Additionally, they are explained thoroughly to secure that it is clear what the purpose of why and how each of the methods are used. There are descriptions of the procedures of how the different methods were carried out. Dubé & Paré (2003) argue that documenting the collection procedures are one of the prerequisites for repeating a case study. Moreover, the multiple data collection method consisting of a case study and survey, combining survey and interview with an intervention (qualitative and quantitative data), if the results corroborate, it is more likely to give accurate and convincing results (Dubé & Paré, 2003).

### 3.5 Validity

The thesis validity depends on the correctness and credibility of how the collected data is interfered with and interpreted. Watson (2015) explains that “validity is the extent to which the measurement made by an instrument measuring what the researcher is interested in” (p. 3). One of the measures to make the results of the study more valid was triangulation, using different data sources to collect data. This method makes it possible to compare and analyze the topic from different perspectives. Through the triangulation of this thesis, I gathered information about how culture is taught, both from a qualitative interview, own teaching during the intervention and a quantitative survey.

There is a term called reactivity that has to do with the researcher's influence on the research setting (Maxwell, 2008). The intervention and interview are examples of cases where I, as a researcher, had an influence on the students and the interviewee just by being present while conducting the research. The intervention and the interview are the two possible sources to reactivity in this research. The complex classroom situation made it challenging to be a researcher and teach the class simultaneously. For example, coming into a new class as a

stranger that is both supposed to teach and do research changes the dynamics of the normal routines.

Researcher bias is the researcher's subjectivity to the research (Maxwell, 2012). First, I choose to research this topic because it is interesting. By saying this, I mean that it is normal that I have created some expectations as to what I will find out from this study. These subjective opinions should not have an influence on the implications of the results and how the thesis is presented.

Quantitative research methods are structured, and the researcher normally has little subjective influence on the results. Therefore, the survey contributes to more validity on this matter. However, the qualitative methods, like the case study in the context of this thesis, usually are less structured and more exploratory. One way to reduce or eliminate researcher bias in qualitative research methods is by providing rich data (Maxwell, 2012). These detailed data provide a complete and revealing picture of what was done or collected. Transcriptions of interviews and thick descriptions are examples of rich data. From the intervention, I collected posters and word clouds from the students' contributions to the pre-and-post tests. All the posters are presented as an appendix attached to this document. The word clouds and some of the posters are also presented in the result section. Additional field notes were lacking. I could have used more time in the aftermath of the interventions to write down immediate thoughts, and I could have asked the class's teacher to write notes or fill in forms while she observed during the lessons. The interview, on the other hand, was audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcription prevented me from making confusions about the responses to the questions. It enabled me to convey her words accurately without interpreting her answers and possibly mix the responses to my subjective ideas.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

The ethical consideration that was taken was to make participants of the survey anonymous. This consideration was made in relation to the survey, the interview, and the intervention. I also sent an application to the Norwegian Centre for Research and Data to make sure they registered and approved my plan so I could complete with the teacher interview.

## 4 Results

This section will present the results and analyze the semi-structured interview, the survey, and the teaching intervention. The most salient results will be discussed. Therefore, the less relevant results are excluded in favor of prioritizing finding answers to the thesis' research questions. Some results are brought to further attention because they are relevant to those research questions. Both the interview and the survey were performed and responded to in Norwegian; thus, all the results from the survey, interview, and most of the intervention are translated to English as accurately as possible. The quotations, survey questions and all results of the survey and intervention are all translated versions. The results of the intervention and interview, which are parts of the case study, will be provided in the form of a thick description of the most relevant findings.

### 4.1 Survey

The survey provides data about teachers' attitudes and practices connected to the teaching of culture in the L2 classroom and intercultural competence. The results will be presented through charts and explained to avoid misunderstandings and create a clear picture of what is presented before the discussion later in the thesis.

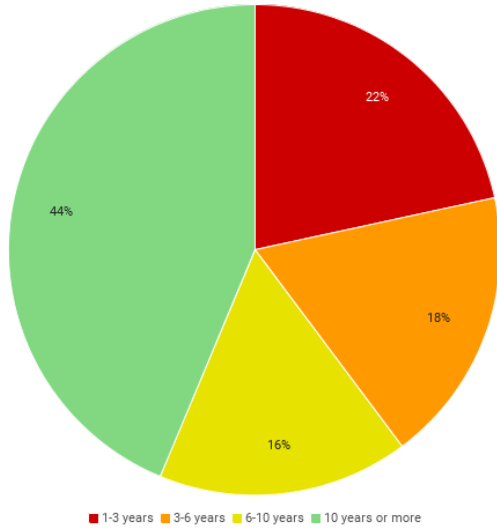
Among the 176 respondents in total, 52% fully completed the survey, 47% provided some answers, and one respondent distributed the survey. There were 162 *Females* and 14 *Male* participants in the survey, no participants identified as *Other*, and no one checked *Do not wish to answer*.

The questionnaire collected information about how many years of experience the teachers had with the subject of English, which can be interesting to have in mind when reading the results of the responses to the survey. Furthermore, 77 respondents answered that they had been teaching the subject of English for ten years or more, and this makes up 44% of the total participants. This number is not very surprising due to the wide range of years this rubric allows. Moreover, 22% of the teachers had taught English between one and three years, a total of 38 respondents, and this was the second-highest answer for the question of how many years they had taught English (see Figure 1).

There was a broad variation between which grades the participants were teaching. The majority, which made up 49%, taught 5-7<sup>th</sup> grade. This bulk of respondents taught what is equivalent to Middle School English in the Norwegian school system (see Figure 2).

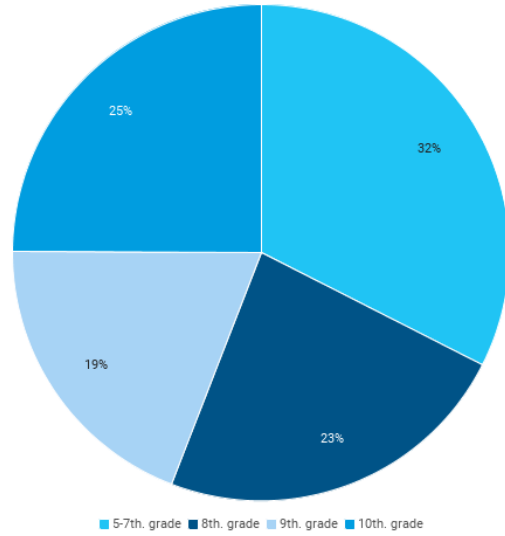
**Figure 1:**

*How many years have you taught English?*



**Figure 2:**

*Which grades do you teach?*



**Figure 3:**

*The term "culture" includes?*

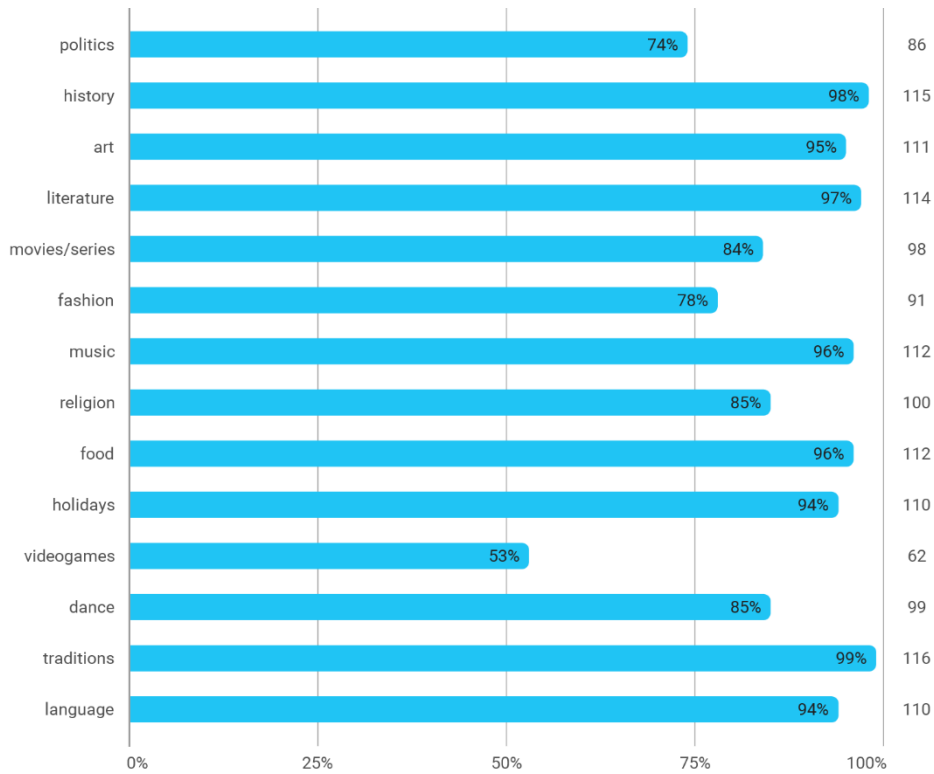
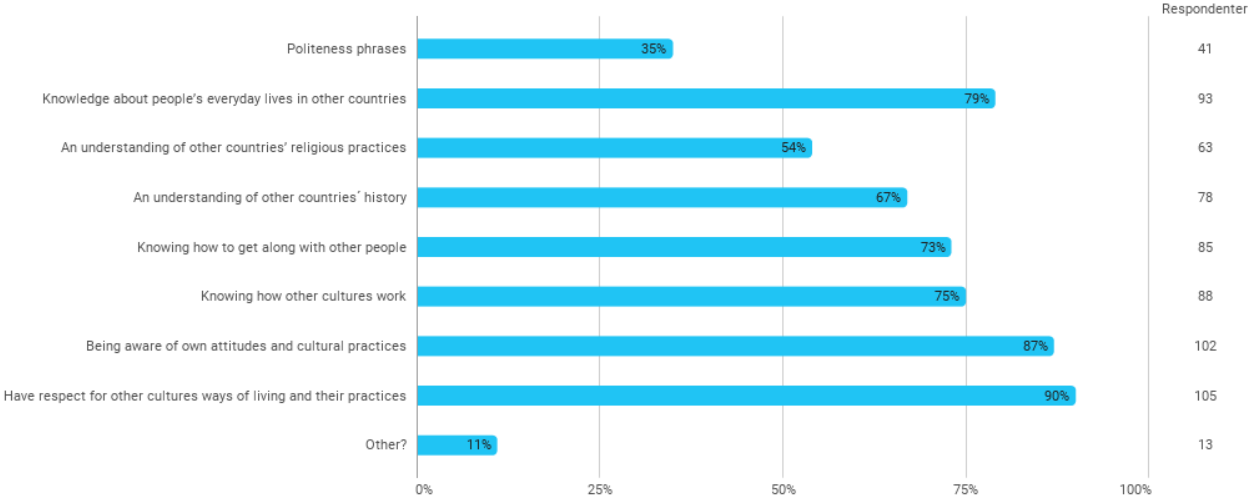


Figure 3 shows that all of the options are entailed by over 75% of the respondents, except for video games and politics. Over 90% of the respondents have included history, art, literature, music, food, holidays, traditions, and languages in the term “culture.” There were, in total, 117 respondents answering this question. Videogames was the option that got the lowest response, with only 53% of the respondents.

**Figure 4:**

*How would you define intercultural competence?*



This chart (figure 4) indicates many different interpretations of the term intercultural competence. There were in total 117 respondents for this question as well. The highest valued definition was about having respect for other ways of living. 90% of the respondents agreed with this statement. What is more, *Being aware of own attitudes and cultural practices*, *Knowledge about people's everyday lives in other countries*, and *Knowing how other cultures work*, had 75% or higher response rates. Surprisingly, only 35%, 41 out of 117 respondents, thought of *Politeness phrases* as a factor describing intercultural competence. The option of *Other* for this question is one they could check if they wished to supply any additional thoughts on what intercultural competence means. These are key words and phrases that characterized the answers received: the complexity of the term culture and what it actually entails, being open to other cultures, having curiosity and engagement towards other cultures, reflecting over own and others' practices to enhance understanding, obtaining self-awareness, and accepting people that are different from ourselves.

**Figure 5:**

*How important is culture in the teaching of English?*

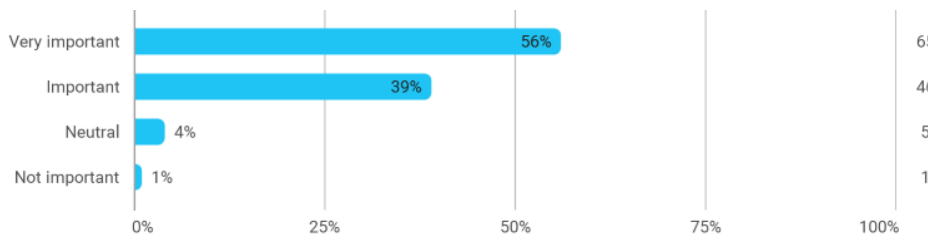


Figure 5 targets the teachers' beliefs on the importance of teaching culture in the teaching of English. One respondent (1%) answered that culture is *Not important*, 4% of the respondents were *Neutral* about its importance of it, but 56 % valued it very much, and 39% taught it is *Important*. To get more insight into what the respondents were thinking, I asked them to write what they meant is or is not important within the cultural aspect of English teaching, as a follow-up question. The significant majority mentioned crucial parts of why culture is important. Different aspects of intercultural competence were mentioned (understanding, knowledge, attitudes). Other valuable responses were communication, being able to see oneself from an outside perspective, differences and similarities, respect, tolerance, preventing prejudice, and identity. Democracy and citizenship were also mentioned, as one of the interdisciplinary topics in the National curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Perhaps not directly relevant to this thesis, it is still worth mentioning that one of the respondents voiced their thoughts on what a shame it is that culture is being less prioritized in favor of literature.

The next question approaches the different types of culture, the “big C” culture and the “little c” culture, to find out which type the teachers mainly use in their teaching.

**Figure 6:**

*Which types of culture do you teach?*

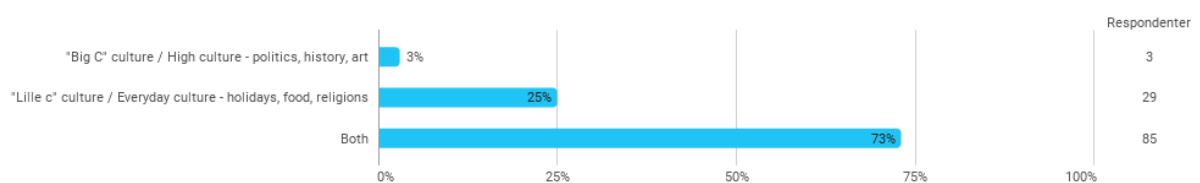
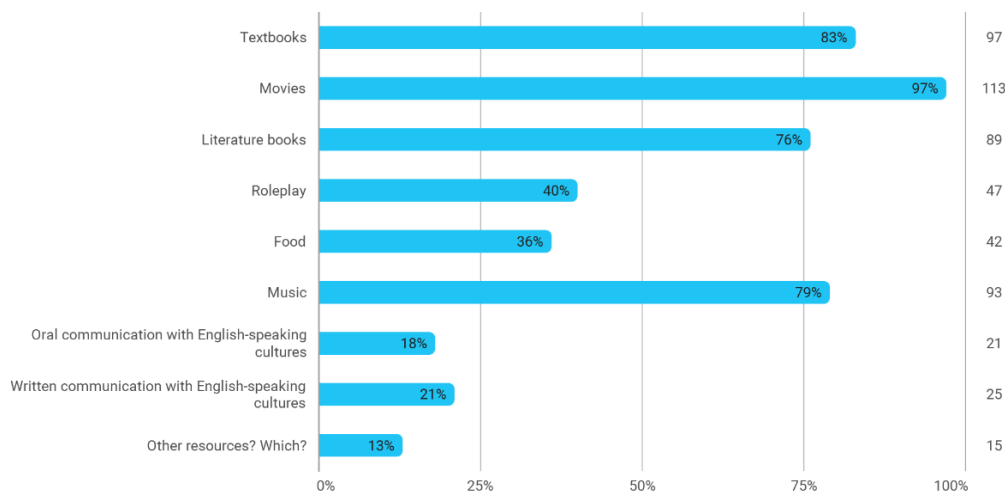


Figure 6 shows that the teachers differ in their focus area but target the broad term of culture. *Big C culture* alone was approached by 3% of the respondents. This approach targets topics like history, art, literature, and politics. On the other hand, “little c” culture is often referred to as the more everyday topics such as food, traditions, holidays, and religious practices. *Little c culture* was used alone by 25% of the respondents, while 73% answered that they teach the two combined.

**Figure 7:**

*Which resources do you use to teach about culture?*



This chart (figure 7) of resources used to teach culture shows that *Textbooks*, *Movies*, *Literature books*, and *Music* are clearly the most popular resource material, as they are all over 75%. *Roleplay* and *Food* are used in over 35% of the cases of this survey. Some teachers used direct communication with English-speaking people. *Oral communication with English-speaking countries* was used by 18%, and 21 % answered that they used *Written communication with English-speaking countries*. Other alternative resources mentioned under the *Other resources? Which?* rubric were checked off by 13% of the respondents. Among those answers were digital resources such as videogames, podcasts, social media, lexicons, news, YouTube, other webpages with activities, and useful teaching material such as Kahoot and Duckster. Discussion and dialogue were other alternatives. Texts were also mentioned, not just referring to literature but more formal and non-fiction texts.

In the following I will present the results of the interview, which, partially also targets some of the same questions about attitudes and beliefs toward the teaching of culture and intercultural competence.



## 4.2 Interview

The interview was split in two parts, one part about her beliefs and practices to teacher culture and on part, a discussion about some of the observations she made from the intervention. There is an attached interview guide, as an appendix in the last pages of this document.

### 4.2.1 PART 1: Teacher's beliefs and practices in teaching culture

The teacher interviewed for this project had been working as a teacher for 14 years. It is not specified if she taught English all those years, but she does imply that English was one of the subjects she added to her education after starting to work as a teacher. During the interview, she was asked to define intercultural understanding:

Having knowledge about different cultures, especially at the lower secondary level, the English classes often tend to focus on teenagers living in other countries, for example. How they live, what they do, where they go to school, and what they eat. Cultural understanding is also about being acquainted with, not just having knowledge about, but also being aware and understanding that cultures are different and that we cannot just see it through our own "glasses" (from our own perspectives) but knowing that there are fundamental differences between for example Norway and Britain, USA and Norway, and the USA, Britain, and Norway.

The teacher provides a reflected picture of the term and relates it to the topic of the intervention. She values understanding and awareness of the other and knowledge that can give us understanding of the fundamental differences between the cultures.

The following question to the interview asked whether she thought the student know more about English-speaking countries today, rather than 15 years ago. The teacher answered yes, arguing that "by being exposed to series and movies and other things the teenagers see," the teenagers were more familiar with these countries now than earlier.

Like the survey respondents, the teacher was also asked how important she thought it was to teach about culture. Like the majority of the respondent to the survey, she believed it was very important. She adds that the subject of English is not responsible for covering this topic alone.

The teacher was also asked how she usually approached the teaching of culture in her English classes. The teacher shared that culture is targeted both directly, teaching about

countries such as Australia, the USA, and New Zealand, and through different types of texts from the textbook or additional material (that the teacher believe is relevant) where it is crucial to know something about the background or the context in which the text is written. She adds that this is probably how she approaches culture within the subject of English, both directly on cultural knowledge and countries, society and lifestyles, and texts. In addition to texts, the teacher uses textbooks for the most part, as they are updated, and there is not that much time to look for other sources; hence why not use what they have when it is good enough. The time does not even allow them to get through the whole book, so even there, they need to make choices on which topics they want to focus on. She also applies that movies and single texts extracted from other material than the textbooks are used if they find it relevant. She gives an example from the inauguration of Biden last year, where she used the poem by Amanda Gorman in different ways in her teaching.

An additional question attached to the use of textbooks in teaching was how she thought they portrayed culture. She answered that they had been talking a lot about how to not always portray the stereotypes, raising examples like the Native Americans, the Māori people, the Aboriginals, and the Baca dance. Further, she thinks these groups and topics are often portrayed as stereotypical and adds that it has to do with their lack of time to grasp everything. In her experience, they do not have enough time to go in-depth into all topics. She notes that in her teaching, she avoids stereotypes.

Of course, we explain that not all Native Americans live like this and like this. We try to make them more aware, and I think we are better at that now than earlier when we were happy to put them in boxes and convey that “these people are like this.”

However, I believe that now it is more encouraged to teach understanding beyond the stereotypical.

She referred to the intervention, where we talked about one typical American school lunch. We talked about how the schools offer different types of food, even though, still, some dishes are more typical, and do not serve in Great Britain or Norway. After having problematized the topic a little bit, the teacher sums it up like this: “we need to learn what the Native Americans are, what their culture is, but we also need to talk about how not all Native Americans live like this or have the same practices as maybe the majority. But this is what characterizes their culture and their origin and roots”.

The following question builds on what is already discussed, namely what she values most within the term culture. She says, “lifestyles, traditions, how we live, what we eat to be very concrete. The different rituals some cultures practice, or what type of music can

sometimes be very relevant”. The teacher seems to have a broad picture of what the term entails.

#### 4.2.2 PART 2: Teacher’s observations connected to the intervention

The teacher was interviewed in the aftermath of the intervention. The intention of this second part of the interview was to create a more reliable result where there were two points of view to interpret what occurred during the intervention, a familiar teacher (to the class) and a student/researcher (from the outside). The research question related to the intervention aims to see if a particular intervention about foodways can help develop the students’ intercultural competence.

While discussing the intervention, I found it interesting to hear how she, as a teacher, would go about a situation where students utter disrespectful utterances, which in this case was connected to stereotypes against Americans. One of the students yelled out, “All Americans are fat,” in the classroom. To this question, the teacher explained that she would probably ask questions like “why?” “what do you mean by that?” or “why do you say so?”, or “what is the reason that you say what you are saying now?” She further explains that she would try to develop a conversation about the utterance to create awareness and enhance reflection around the topic, and then, if necessary, “tell the truth” afterward. This question was asked to see if the teacher did any measures to challenge the students’ intercultural competence in these unplanned scenarios.

The teacher was asked several questions regarding her observations/guesses of their learning outcome in general and attached to the main topic, intercultural competence. First of all, she mentioned that the students clearly showed interest in the subject and were curious to know more. In other words, they seemed motivated. The teacher gave examples of utterances from the students that supported her statement. Furthermore, she explained that she thinks the students understood how things work, especially connected to the topic of school lunch. She adds that they also got acquainted with American and British culture to some extent.

Earlier in the interview, I asked if she knew about and could share some thoughts about the students’ previous attitudes towards the targeted countries’ cultures. She says that it is clear that the students’ knowledge and attitudes come from, for example, movies or series and that they have little contact with these cultures outside of that. However, this has given them quite a bit of background knowledge.





stereotypical type of food was mentioned, namely, fish and chips; however, also peanut butter sandwiches, but rather as an American stereotype.

There were more food examples connected to the American school lunch. Among other things, Tacobell, chicken, pizza, juice, (gross) burger, unhealthy food, corn dogs, hot dogs, and juice was mentioned. Tacobell is a famous American brand for fast food. Chicken is quite a strange prevalent. However, other, more predictable types of meat were also mentioned, although mostly fast food like hot dogs, corndogs, burgers, and pizza.

#### 4.3.2 Post-test

The post-test consisted of a poster presentation. The students got one hour of preparation time at school before presenting. The task was given to the students like this on google classroom. Their posters were made on Canva; a webpage meant to design posters. Figure 12, below is the task description to the post-test.

#### **Figure 12:**

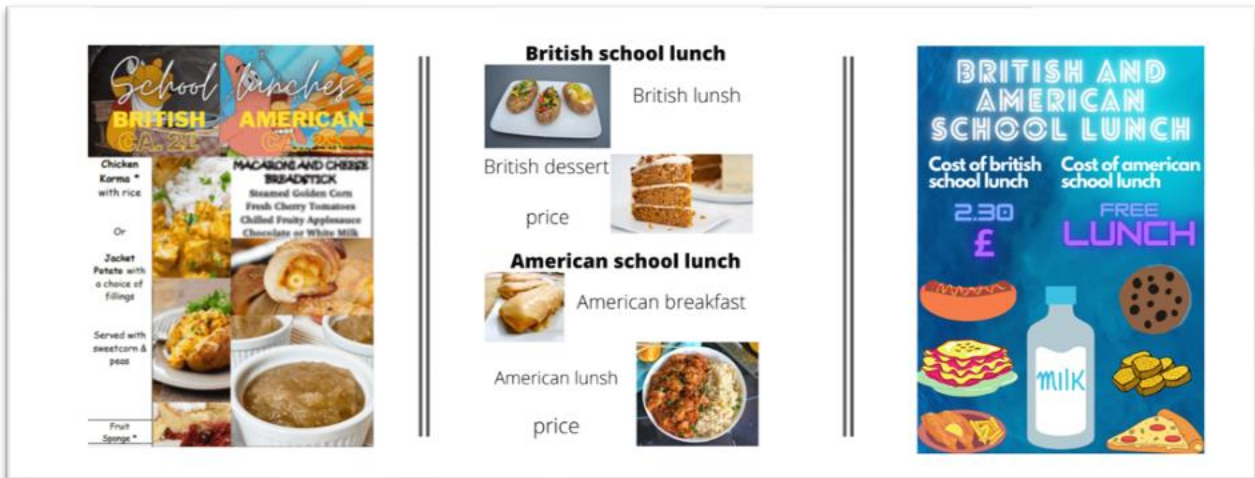
##### *Task description*

Make a poster where you present an American and a British school lunch. The information on the poster has to be realistic and correct. Include pictures to illustrate and use them to compare and explain the differences and similarities. Be prepared to present the poster for the rest of the class. The criteria are presented under:

- use the correct words for the different types of food you present
- suggest a suitable price for how much the lunch would cost
- compare the presented lunches with a typical Norwegian lunch
- show understanding of the word stereotype

**Figure 13:**

*Poster examples (1)*



**Figure 14:**

*Poster examples (2)*



Above, in Figure 13 and 14, there are some examples of the student posters, that was part of the post-test. In the following, I will present a diagram regarding the content of the posters (see all in Appendix 3).

Below, is a diagram explaining how the students' posters present American and British school lunches (figure 15). The diagram is divided into five categories. From figure 13 and 14 one can see that were different approaches to solving this task. Some focused on presenting one concrete meal for each of the two countries, and some chose to focus more on the differences and similarities between the two.

**Figure 15:**

*Statistics from poster content. (Blue – America, Yellow – Britain)*



One poster, in particular, was challenging to evaluate due to unsharp pictures that could not be read. This poster consisted of one British full-week menu and an American month lunch menu or similar, whereas the American one was not possible to read. This influenced the measurement of the American bars of the diagram, except for the *Price* bar. A clearer picture would likely raise the American *Hot food* and *Fast food* percentage, maybe also the *Immigrant cuisine* bar, due to the whole week/month menu, consisting of a variety of food.

Some posters showed that some schools in the USA and Britain offer several food options. Hence, the school lunch may be immigrant cuisine, *Hot food*, and even *Fast food*. Some of the numbers are pretty high because they were counted more than just one of the rubrics; thus, food can be *Hot food*, *Fast food*, and *Immigrant cuisine*. As we can read from the chart, the students agree that both American and British students eat hot lunch, either they bring brought lunch or buy in the cafeteria. However, over 60% of the students presented fast food options when talking about American school lunches, whereas only half of the students did the same when presenting British school lunches. Fast food among the students' content is counted with food such as hamburgers, pizza, jacket potatoes, mac and cheese, and corn dogs.

The posters also brought up immigrant cuisine. It is difficult to categorize food into immigrant and non-immigrant food because food can be typical in one country but not traditionally descend from that place. For the sake of this analysis, *Immigrant cuisine* is food not likely to be in the weekly rotation of most Norwegian families like, for example, curry or



tikka masala. According to the students, the results implicate that Britain school lunch is more influenced by *Immigrant cuisine* than the American school lunch.

Desert was another interesting topic that was mentioned in the posters. Many students learned that a sweet treat after lunch is part of American and British school lunches. The deserts mentioned varied from fruits to cookies and cakes, yogurt with granola, chocolate bars, or rice Krispie. Deserts were mentioned in over 65% of the posters about American school lunches, and around 50% related to the British school lunches. Having a sweet treat after a hot meal is common in Norway as well, but not associated with our brought school lunch. It is not even allowed to bring chocolate to school in many cases. The students have learned that both in Britain and the USA, the students eat hot meals, bigger than a traditional Norwegian school lunch, consisting of some pieces of bread and maybe some fruit. In many countries, a piece of fruit is a typical desert after heavy meals.

The last bar in the diagram is about the cost of school lunches. The Norwegian students were strikingly hung up by what school lunches cost. In the task description, one of the criteria was that the students would give a realistic example of the price of the meal they presented. During the intervention's teaching session, we talked about how some American students with low-income families could apply to get funded school lunch or partially funded. This is an offer to make the school system fair and for everyone. During Covid-19, however, meaning the current and last year, the government paid fully for all students, whereas usually, it costs around \$2.50 per meal. For clarity's sake, they could have mentioned that usually, the students pay around \$2.40, but due to Covid-19, now lunch is provided for free for all students. This was information they had access to during the task and something that had been discussed in one of the previous classes. Around half of the students suggested a pricing for their presented school lunches. No more than two or three students explained this situation regarding the American prices.

Regarding the British pricing, most of the students that mentioned anything about the cost answered that a school lunch would typically be around £2.30. This analysis of the results of the posters is sole of the actual posters. The students' presentation of them should have been observed more carefully.

I wish that I could see that the students reflected on this and provided more answers. It is not easy to know whether the students' consciously just referred to the current situation, where the school lunch is funded or not. One other observation around pricing is that some students get funded lunches because they come from low-income families. Many of these Norwegian students found this arrangement quite unfair, while the intention is to make the

economical situation fairer. In short, the Norwegian students had difficulty appreciating childhood poverty and the US techniques for remedying it. Some of the posters also included how much school lunches cost for staff/adults at the school, which was around \$4.00 at one of the schools we had checked with. All this pricing information became a more prominent topic than initially planned because the students showed such an interest in the topic.

The parts of the posters that are not put into charts are about how the students' reflective skills during the presentation and have to do with how they fulfilled the assessment criteria. The criteria explained that the students would compare the presented lunch with a typical Norwegian lunch. Additionally, they were told to talk about the differences and similarities between the American and British school lunches in the assignment text. I experienced that around half of the students who presented their posters fulfilled this criterion. The other half mainly focused on presenting the food without contrasting them.

Using the right words was another criterion, and quite many managed to do so. This task required the students to speak freely without more than keywords to look at. The participation was good, there were some absences, but the teacher did not think it had to do with the presentation. All the present students with posters to show presented in front of the whole class. Most of them used the appropriate terms for the food they presented.

#### 4.3.3 Other observations

An additional activity after the pre-test was a vocabulary task where the students were divided into groups of three or four. The groups were given words that they were supposed to define before sitting down. When all had sat down, they shared, group for group, what they had discussed. After all the groups had asked to share, I explained them carefully, in plenary. Stereotype and self-awareness were the two words they were asked to discuss. Below (see figure 16) are some of the students' explanations of the word stereotype.

**Figure 16:**

*Stereotypes*

- Typical (typical Norwegian; ski etc.)
- What people think it will be like, what is typical
- What we think of people (but not all)
- What we think of a group or society, for example you think that Americans are dumb and lazy and always eat fast food, but it's probably not true
- It's like thinking that every black man is criminal, but it's not true
- Never judge a book by it's cover

Some students did not really know the term, and some tried to reflect over the term even though they could not come to a common agreement or understanding of the word. Each of these explanations gives pointers to what a stereotype is. While discussing this topic, I asked them whether stereotypes are good or bad. Some of the students reflected on this issue well and saw that stereotypes could be both good and bad. One student also said, “it can be frustrating if someone thinks they know everything about you just because you are (for instance, Norwegian), and you are a whole different person.” Even though it is not a very accurate explanation, one can understand from this point of view that stereotyping is not always good. It can make us assume that people with the same characteristics behave or do things a certain way.

Self-awareness is another word connected to intercultural competence and has to do with being aware of own beliefs and actions. The students made these thoughts about the term self-awareness (see Figure 17).

**Figure 17:**

*Self-awareness*

- When you know what's happening to yourself
- If you want to punch someone, you can't, because they will get hurt. You know it's wrong. You don't do it
- Selfcontrol
- You know what you believe
- You know yourself if you did something bad, or good.
- You are aware what you do

Figure 17 shows that the students have shared opinions on what self-awareness means. Even though not all these suggestions are spot on, they are making some valid points that are not necessarily wrong.

It could seem like the terms were too complex for the students at this level to comprehend on their own, and I believe they could need some additional support.

The activity itself was clear, and the students were actively engaged, but they got distracted easily due to the difficult words.

In the final section, I will discuss some of the findings from this thesis, and look at how they intersect with theories about “big C” and “little c” cultures. This section will also look at the previous Norwegian-based studies on intercultural competences and the sections of LK20 that deal with this topic.

## 5 Discussion

Culture has been given a central focus in the new curriculum. The curriculum for the subject of English explains how the subject should give an important opportunity to work with cultural understanding, communication, and identity development (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). It mentions how the English subject, in particular, should provide the students with a foundation to communicate with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Students should learn to be confident users of the language both orally, in reading, and in writing (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The ability to know several languages is an asset, both in school and in society, and the subject should work to promote this idea, so the students can be motivated to learn. The interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship is particularly relevant. (Deardorff, 2009) argue that global citizenship and intercultural competence are overlapping concepts. This may also support why one should not directly measure, evaluate or assess it but use these concepts as a pillar in all teaching (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017).

This research made me want to look deeper into three main topics of particular interest. First, I wanted to look more into the student’s understanding of self-awareness, which will also be discussed in the context of intercultural tolerance. During the intervention, these terms became central both related to how the students solved the pre-and-posttest and their reflections in class. The students found it difficult to understand why other cultures practice things differently than from their own culture. Second, I will address how stereotyping is connected to the students’ intercultural competence and how they do not

naturally interrogate their stereotypes. The third topic for discussion is how teachers today seem to use popular media more than textbooks and, related to this, the fourth topic targets the change in culture teaching, from “big C” culture to “little c” culture.

### 5.1 Self-awareness

First, in their pre-test, the students were told to write what was typically Norwegian, and to think like a foreigner talking about the Norwegian culture. They mentioned different traditional foods and activities like skiing, the cheese-slicer, brown cheese, chocolate, moose, football, Vikings, and the Sami people, the indigenous people of Norway. These are just some of the examples of how the students show awareness of what is typical for the Norwegian culture, seeing themselves from an outside perspective.

While discussing self-awareness, however, the students did not seem to be able to relate the meaning of the word to what they did in the previous task implicitly, in the pre-test (word cloud). It is difficult to define these types of terms that are mostly shown in action. The students were not explicitly told that the pre-task was testing their self-awareness, so it would not be expected that they could see the relation. However, as the teacher, I could refer back to the task to illustrate how that was a task of self-awareness when we discussed the term.

Kramsch (2013) highlights the importance of this skill, self-awareness, to becoming an intercultural speaker because it is one crucial factor in learning to understand others. When we are aware of our own practices, cultures, and ways of doing things, we may more easily learn about other countries and understand why other people also do things differently. Kramsch (2013) argues that self-awareness is the key to understanding these differences, and Deardorff (2009) in turn believes that this self-awareness leads to more knowledge. Edge (2013) explains that food is a form of communication that is closely tied to sociological subfields of culture, religion, and ethnicity. As a form of communication, food is thus an important subject for any language student.

Nevertheless, having a deeper understanding of the self is only one dependent factor in understanding others (Kramsch, 2013). One also needs knowledge about other people. The Ministry of Education and Research (2019) conveys that the English subject should teach the students to handle different perspectives and ways of interpreting the world, and promote curiosity and engagement in the service of preventing prejudice. Without being aware that there are many factors to why cultures are different, it is hard to understand why others do things differently. Being aware of some of these factors might enhance our understanding and

acceptance of other cultures and should also engage the student and raise curiosity about cultural diversity.

An example of this is the discussion about low-income families and funded school lunches in America. During the intervention, several students initially reacted, saying that the practice was unfair. This is just one example of how lack of awareness leads to less tolerance and acceptance of other cultures' practices. They might not be able to understand that this measure is necessary and supposed to make it fairer because the government and financial system in these countries are so different from what they know. In this case, the US is a larger country with far more socio-economical differences between the people, and the money is distributed differently. Thinking that the funded lunch is unfair may be understandable because of the students' young ages, but it is one example that teaching intercultural competence is crucial.

Within the same conversation about funded school lunches, some students started picking on one of their co-students, remarking that this student is an example of a low-income student, likely to get funded school lunches. The students are still immature at this age, and bullying is something that we see frequently in Norwegian schools. Though there can be different reasons for this, I would like to point out two possible explanations for this behavior. The students have problems respecting differences even within their own local cultures. There are some socio-economical differences in Norway, but they are not nearly the same as in many other countries and they can have misunderstood the differences between poverty in America and reduced economic power in Norway. Although bullying itself is a sign of low self-awareness, the student's immediate reaction and identification of a "poor" student, could also be an attempt to assimilate the new knowledge through the already existing competence (Kramsch, 2013). This process is a natural part of gaining understanding but, obviously, should not be yelled aloud or provide the grounds for bullying.

## 5.2 Stereotyping

The second topic targets stereotyping and how this was seen during the intervention. The students found it challenging to discuss the term stereotypes without being introduced to any definition. It was difficult for them to explain in words, but most showed an understanding of the concept by explaining that it is something we think about a group of people or society that might not be true for them all. The Mentimeter word clouds and the student posters show some examples of how stereotypes are parts of their understanding of the targeted cultures. As for the word cloud about Norway, the students did bring up some

stereotypical facts like skiing, brown cheese, and Vikings, things that the students know do not apply to all Norwegians but are typically for the country. For example, knowing that Norway has some good ski-athletes and that many Norwegians like to go skiing are not stereotypes; those are facts. However, it is a common stereotype that all Norwegians ski.

Fish and chips, the stereotypical British dish, was mentioned just once in the Mentimeter about British and American school lunch (see figure 10 and 11). Regarding the USA, many different types of fast food were mentioned, in addition to unhealthy food, as one of the students wrote in the cloud, which is also a bit of an American stereotype. The posters also reflect this particular stereotype regarding America, whereas over 60% of them present examples of fast food. However, none of the posters mentioned fish and chips as an example of British school lunch. Still, Indian food, which is considered a British national food but which is an uncommon Norwegian school lunch, was represented several times. The participants in Johansson et al.'s (2009) study provided a more specific and objective language when describing the different types of food. In contrast, the participants in the present intervention used a language that was more characterized by stereotypes and subjectivity.

During the intervention, one student yelled out, "all Americans are fat." This is another typical stereotype connected to some Americans' fast food consumption. In the aftermath of the intervention, during the interview, the teacher was asked how she would approach these kinds of situations. The answer she provided was a practical example of how to teach intercultural competence in the sense of awareness, understanding, and skills. The teacher said that she would purposefully try to make a conversation out of the rather unfortunate claim. She would ask the students questions to make them aware of how they were thinking and try to have them answer why they ended up with this conclusion. After hearing the students' reflections, she would try to convey a more nuanced and realistic picture of reality.

A consequence of stereotyping is that they are simplifications of a more complex reality, which does not allow the students to understand the diverse reality that exists within countries and cultures. The students need skills and attitudes and more knowledge about the target cultures and their own. As Kramsch (1993) argues, they need to be introduced for meanings rather than facts to build an understanding of foreign values, attitudes, and mindsets. Jørgensen (2011), and her study on how textbooks promote the different components of intercultural competence and to which degree, finds that the traditional way is

the most dominant. Kramersch (1993) explains, facts are valued more than meaning and may impair the development of intercultural competence.

Stereotype is a term that is usually referred to with negative associations. However, it is the source and outline for what we may know about a culture, although it does not always represent the whole culture, and the diversity within. Many teachers end up teaching stereotypes because they know too little about the target cultures or feel like they lack knowledge (Kramersch, 2013), and also, as the interviewee claimed, teachers lack time to promote in-depth understanding. Promoting intercultural competence to learning situations does not mean you need to be the expert, but be encouraging and create curiosity for new cultures. More recently, a survey of language teaching in Europe ((LACE 2006: 8) in Byram, 2013) summarized that teachers said the following:

The difficulty in developing intercultural competence in the language classroom mentioned most frequently by teachers is lack of time. Two aspects are involved: time within the timetable to incorporate the development of intercultural skills, and time outside the classroom to plan such teaching and to organize international contacts, projects and so on.

The second main difficulty that teachers identify is shortage of suitable resources. Some teachers complain that the textbooks are inadequate. Shortage of computers and Internet access is a problem for some teachers in some countries. 92.5% of all respondents in our study (and 91.9% of ISCED 1 teachers) report that they feel there should be more specific guidance for teachers with regard to the development of intercultural competence. (Byram, 2013, p. 5-6)

Social media and movies are also sources to knowledge but should be used carefully, though they might also contribute to more stereotypes. It is challenging to steer away from all stereotypes even in the classroom when teachers also are colored by them. The use of stereotypes is often implied with negative associations. However, it is also a great source to gain general knowledge about cultures that we are not familiar with. It is often the basis of the knowledge we have about a culture.

### 5.3 Popular media

The third topic is related to the teachers' use of popular media. The extent to which the students participating in this research were taught culture in the traditional way is not part of the investigation. However, the class's teacher offered her reflections during the interview and showed an understanding of intercultural competence and clear ideas about how to teach



culture in the classroom. She explained that the textbook was her main source of inspiration and material for her teaching, with some exceptions. In her opinion, the textbook was updated and a good resource. Although textbooks have improved from the time Lund (2007, 2012) and Jørgensen (2011) published their criticisms of textbook-dependent teaching, we can still interrogate whether textbooks provide the best sources for teaching intercultural competences.

While the teacher interviewed in this study relied on textbooks, the results from the survey indicated that 97% of the teachers used movies, while textbooks were used by 83% of the informants around the same amount used as music and literature. Based on these results, there are reasons to believe that teachers approach popular media like movies, series, YouTube, online news, other online web sources, and other social media, like TikTok, to teach about culture and are not always dependent on the textbooks for this. When we look at what the teachers report as falling under the category of culture, *videogames* were considered a part of culture in 53% of the cases. It was the alternative with the least respondents, which means that although many teachers have a broad definition of culture, that definition perhaps has its limits.

The teacher interviewee also supports the use of movies in culture teaching but implied that she mostly used textbooks and sometimes other additional texts they find relevant. She argued that the time was one issue and that the textbooks were updated and new and, therefore, reasonable to use instead of using unnecessary time to look for new content. However, she gave an example of where they used the poem for the inauguration of Biden as president, both to develop oral and written skills. This is an example of a task where the students got to work with language through authentic and meaningful material as supported by the communicative approach (Risager, 2007).

The intervention aimed towards teaching culture using popular media like PowerPoint, Mentimeter, interviews, websites, pictures, and Canva. This is something that permeated the intervention without really reflecting over it. I believe this choice was made unconsciously but because of the teaching I received at the University. The professors have focused on making us independent from using the textbooks in our teaching, promoting other sources of new material. The intervention results also imply that students have gained their knowledge about the different countries comes from other sources than the textbooks. While one cannot definitely trace the origin of their extra-curricular knowledge, I believe the students are reliant on digital resources for their information.

Using popular media not necessarily instead of, but in addition to textbooks is likely to encourage the students, drawing the learning objectives closer to their reality in ways that can

seem meaningful to them. Another implication of the use of popular media might be how it gives greater opportunities to vary the teaching and introduce the students to a more extensive diversity of material than textbooks.

This varied use of teaching material made me curious whether or not the choice of material also affected the content teachers teach. In the results of this study, I found that “little c” culture and a stronger mix of “little c” and “big C” culture together are more prioritized among the teachers from this survey than an exclusive diet of “big C” culture. Previous studies, such as Listuen (2017), have found that “big C” culture is the target focus of culture teaching. It is possible that the digitization of education has changed teachers’ view of culture – even since Listuen published in 2017. This promotion of “little c” culture in English teaching may reflect the increasing saturation of popular media and the transition to the new curriculum (LK20).

#### 5.4 Intercultural competence

The results from the survey also reflect changes in how intercultural competence is defined. Figure 3 from the result section shows that 98% of the teachers believe history is part of culture and 85% believe religion is part of culture. However, the chart from figure 4 describing intercultural competence tells a different story. Here, only 54% believe that intercultural competence means understanding other countries’ religious practices, and 67% believe that intercultural competence means having a sense of countries’ history. There is thus a discrepancy between what teachers think is culture and how they define intercultural competence.

The survey pointed out that 53% of the respondents answered that video games were part of culture. This result is quite surprising and demonstrates that over half of the teachers have a very wide definition of culture. However, in the question of what intercultural competence means, only 35% of the respondents answered *Politeness phrases*, which is an essential part of intercultural competence because it is a big part of other countries’ cultures. Kramsch (1998) argues that the primary goal of developing intercultural speakers should be developing the ability to adjust the language to the situation, using appropriate and accurate language. If teachers do not consider politeness phrases a part of intercultural competence, they seem to have a sketchy grasp of what that phrase means. Here, the broad vision of culture, contrasts with a very narrow vision of intercultural competence. There seems to be a difficult relationship between how teachers define culture and intercultural awareness.

## 6 Conclusion

This MA thesis combines a teaching intervention of four about foodways in two 8<sup>th</sup>-grade English classrooms, a semi-structured interview with the class's teacher, and a survey to collect data on how English teachers teach culture and how they value the term intercultural competence. By collecting these data, I hoped to find some good ideas on how to improve, if necessary, the teaching of intercultural competence in Lower Secondary Schools in Norway.

Some of the motivation for doing research was to try to see how teachers do and potentially may provide lessons that encourage students to gain intercultural competence to help build a society where we would be “willing to make an effort to understand each other across cultural backgrounds and discuss on the basis of mutual respect” (Skaugen, 2020, p.1). I have, through this research, experienced that teachers seem to have competence on the topic. However, I am not convinced that they have enough competence to pass it on to the students, especially at the lower secondary level. Moreover, this is a challenging issue, but new research and technology open for new teaching strategies, and more intercultural exchange makes us more aware and open to other cultures (Risager, 2007).

During this study, I intended to answer three research questions. The first question asked what students know about the foodways of British and American schoolchildren. As expected, I have found that social media and movies color lower secondary students' knowledge about American and British food cultures. The pre-test results showed that they knew more about the American school lunch than the British, and the knowledge they had regarded mostly unhealthy food in America and how school lunch is presented in Britain. Throughout the intervention, the students gained more knowledge by understanding how school lunch is practiced in the two countries, although fighting stereotypical assumptions seemingly gained through the media took up intervention time.

As for the second research question, I wanted to investigate teachers' definitions of intercultural competence and how they teach culture. First, the teachers seem to have a broad understanding of intercultural competence. The results from the interview and the survey indicate that teachers today teach “little c” culture over “big C” culture to a more considerable extent than a few years back. This is in contrast to the relatively recent claims by Munden & Sandhaug (2017), Listuen (2017), and Jørgensen (2012) who note an overrepresentation of “big C” culture in the schools. This study's result cannot claim that the teachers are steering away from the textbooks, but tentatively suggests that other media commonly supplements the more “big C” focused textbooks.

However, it does seem like teachers' understandings of both culture and intercultural competence is varied. From the survey results, there is no clear definition of what the teachers define as intercultural competence. Although definitions of culture are broad, definitions of intercultural competence are muddy and unclear.

As for the third research question I wanted to find out if teaching foodways to L2 students could be a way to promote intercultural competence. From what this research provides, the answer to this question is yes. The theory section, results, and the discussion give examples of how learning about foodways can develop understanding, awareness, skills, and attitudes, which are all components of intercultural competence (Byram et al., 2002). Previous research shows how some of these components have not been taught frequently or been prioritized to a satisfying level (Skaugen, 2020; Listuen, 2017; Lund, 2012; Jørgensen, 2011), and the results of my intervention did not seem to target all the components either.

Nevertheless, this thesis shows that food opens up a way to talk about intercultural subjects, it can open for engagement and curiosity about other cultures. It is concrete, entails a relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures, a topic easy to relate to, talk about; hence it is easy to make comparisons and learn about differences and similarities (Caffee & Lucey, 2018). Teaching about foodways may contribute to raising critical thinking, developing self-awareness, and making us more aware and open to other ways of thinking (Caffee & Lucey, 2018), which in fact, are some of the central values to the subject of English (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Further, the topic of foodways led to discussions of other things that influence the foodways, such as why some American students from low-income families can get funded school lunches. This discussion furthermore, led to learning about other relevant topics, such as how the economy is distributed in other countries compared to Norway. These are some of the benefits of foodways that have been discussed during this thesis. A longer intervention may have led to even more substantive discussions of food and integration, and social diversity.

## 6.1 Future research

Throughout working with this thesis, the topic of intercultural competence has made me realize how important it is and how relevant and attached it is in both second and foreign language learning. Even though it looks like teachers have knowledge of the topic, it could be beneficial to investigate further activities, topics, and material to use to teach the different components of intercultural competence. This thesis investigated the impact of teaching about foodways to develop intercultural competence. In the future, it would be interesting to see

how other topics and activities can also contribute to developing intercultural competence in different ways.

This topic of intercultural competence and the use of foodways to teach culture are not well-researched topics in Norway. From the 1990s until the 2010s, intercultural competence seemed to be a central topic within international research; however, that focus is not reflected in much Norwegian research from the time. The new curriculum seems designed to correct this and I believe more teachers should learn even more about intercultural competence and how it can help us build acceptance and respect for each other (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

## 6.2 Limitations of study

The thesis has a few limitations, some things that could have been done differently. When first moving into the process of writing I did not feel educated enough to start a master's project. However, through reading others work, and with some good input from my supervisor I got through writing one and one part, until the thesis was completed. I believe some more knowledge, in advance of starting the project would be beneficial, and would lead to a greater understanding and awareness in the choices I made.

One limitation of this study is notetaking. During the intervention and poster presentations this study could benefit from more notes, a clearer picture of how the students presented their posters. Initially, I hoped that the physical posters would include all the information I would want to collect, but it turned out, they did not. During the activity where the students discussed stereotypes and self-awareness, the teacher was asked to take notes. That agreement turned out to be valuable for the results, and I believe that so would recording or taking notes of the students' presentations.

The posters gave another limitation. This has to do with the student absences. The intervention was completed in two different 8<sup>th</sup>-grade classrooms, during four days, one lesson each of the days in each class. Due to Covid-19, other illnesses and other things that hindered their presence, all students were not present all the time, including the one class where they were supposed to present their posters. This resulted in a smaller number of posters to assess, which may also have had an implication on the results of the posters.

A fourth limitation regards the survey responses. The number of respondents in total were 176. However, some questions were only answered by 117 of the respondents. It is usual with surveys that not all initial respondents complete, but it is also possible that I could have done some careful adjustments to prevent it from happening.

### 6.3 Final remarks

The process of writing this thesis has taught me a lot about the research topic and the academic process of writing an MA thesis. It has been an educational experience to work with this topic and it has provided me with a lot of new competence on so many levels. Through working with the topic of the thesis I have gained a new appreciation for the importance of intercultural competence in the L2 classroom, and that food can work as a topic to investigate larger issues. Intercultural competence includes awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge, and all these components need to be developed to become good communicators. Foodways, and other “little c” cultural experiences can help learners develop this competence and in turn, help them to become better users of English.

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## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Appendix 1 – Survey questions

Denne undersøkelsen er rettet mot alle 5-10 lærere som underviser engelsk. Målet er å finne hva og hvordan lærere underviser om kultur i engelskfaget. /This survey target all English teachers 5-10th grade. The aim is to investigate what and how teachers teach culture in the subject of English.

Gender

- (1)  Male
- (2)  Female
- (3)  Other
- (4)  Do not wish to answer

Which year(s) do you teach English?

- (1)  5-7th. grade
- (3)  8th. grade
- (4)  9th. grade
- (5)  10th. grade

How many years have you taught English?

- (1)  1-3 years
- (2)  3-6 years
- (3)  6-10 years
- (4)  10 years or more

The term "culture" includes?

- (1)  politics
- (2)  history
- (3)  art
- (4)  literature
- (5)  movies/series
- (6)  fashion
- (7)  music

- (8)  religion
- (9)  food
- (10)  holidays
- (11)  videogames
- (12)  dance
- (13)  traditions
- (14)  language

How would you define intercultural competence?

- (1)  politeness phrases
- (2)  Knowledge about people's everyday lives in other countries
- (3)  An understanding of other countries' religious practices
- (4)  An understanding of other countries' history
- (5)  Knowing how to get along with other people
- (6)  Knowing how other cultures work
- (7)  Being aware of own attitudes and cultural practices
- (8)  Have respect for other cultures ways of living and their practices
- (9)  Other? \_\_\_\_\_

How important is "culture" in teaching?

- (1)  Very important
- (2)  Important
- (3)  Neutral
- (4)  Not important

Why/Why not?

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Which types of culture do you teach?

- (1)  Big C culture / High culture - politics, history, art
- (2)  Little c-culture / Everyday culture - holidays, food, religions
- (3)  Both

Which resources do you use to teach about culture?

- (1)  Textbooks
- (2)  Movies
- (3)  Literature books
- (4)  Roleplay
- (5)  Food
- (6)  Music
- (7)  Oral communication with English-speaking cultures
- (8)  Written communication with English-speaking cultures
- (9)  Other resources? Which? \_\_\_\_\_

## 8.2 Appendix 2 – Interview guide

### **Intervju guide – lærers observasjoner rundt undervisningsopplegg, og holdninger til tema.**

**(Intervjuet kan gjøres på norsk eller engelsk, alt etter hva som er mest hensiktsmessig for den intervjuede.)**

Del 1 (før prosjektstart):

1. Hvor mange år har du undervist?
2. Hvor mange år har du undervist på denne skolen, og på dette trinnet?
3. Hvilken utdanning har du?
4. Hvordan ville du ha definert kulturell forståelse i en engelsktime?
5. Tror du elever vet mer eller mindre om kulturene i engelskspråklige land enn det de har pleid (år tilbake)? Hvorfor?
6. Hvor viktig tror du det er å undervise om kultur i Engelskfaget? Hvorfor?
7. Hvilke metoder bruker du for å undervise om kultur? Hvordan har du undervist om dette tidligere?
8. Hva legger du mest i ordet kultur?

Del 2 (etter gjennomført prosjekt):

1. Hvilke holdninger og refleksjoner fra elevene rundt prosjektet fikk du innsikt i når du observerte? Gjerne sitert!
2. Hvilke inntrykk fikk du av elevenes læringsutbytte av denne type undervisning i dette tema?
3. Var det noe jeg som underviser kunne gjøre at elevenes læringsutbytte kunne vært bedre eller verre?
4. Hva var normal/unormal oppførsel blant elevene slik de oppførte seg i timene?
5. Gjorde du deg andre observasjoner enn hva som er snakket om?


8.3 Appendix 3 - Students' posters

	
<h2>British school lunch</h2>	<h2>American school lunch</h2>
	
<p><b>Breaded Chicken Fillet</b> served with chipped potatoes, baked beans &amp; peas</p>	<p><b>Burrito</b> served with refried beans, fresh baby carrots, chilled peaches &amp; chocolate or white milk</p>
<p><b>£2.30</b></p>	<p><b>Free</b></p>

## School lunch

- Vegi nuggets and ketchup
- french toast stick
- £2
- boring slice of bread

Steriotype

British	America
	

## School lunch

### Diffrence and similarities

	
	<p>Or</p> 
	

## British school lunch



British lunsh

British dessert



price

## American school lunch



American breakfast

American lunsh

price



**BRITISH AND AMERICAN SCHOOL LUNCH**

Cost of british school lunch: 2.30 £

Cost of american school lunch: FREE LUNCH

**School Lunches**

**BRITISH CA. 2£**

**AMERICAN CA. 2\$**

Chicken Korma \* with rice

Or

Jacket Potato with a choice of fillings

Served with sweetcorn & peas

Fruit Sponge \*



**MACARONI AND CHEESE BREADSTICK**  
 Steamed Golden Corn  
 Fresh Cherry Tomatoes  
 Chilled Fruity Applesauce  
 Chocolate or White Milk



## School lunch

Amarcan school lunsh  
 British scool lunsh  
 Norweegern school lunsh





# School lunch



£2.30



Long lunch



4\$

Long lunch

# School lunch

## American

In America they only have one choice a day, but much good food, on this picture you see turkey gravy and roll mashed potatoes



In America they get free school lunch

## British

In Britain they have up to two choices and they also have amazing food, on this picture you see chicken korma with rice.



In Britain it costs £2.30 in Norway it is around 23 Norwegian kroner

# Lunch menu

Friday 26. aug

- Peperoni pizza
- Chicken patty sandwich
- Yougort and Granola
- Baby carrots, brocoli and assorted fruit



2,50 \$



# Lunch menu

FRIDAY 26. AUG

Chicken churry whit rise

Quorn hot dog whit

Diced Potatoes

Jacket potato whit various toppings



2 £

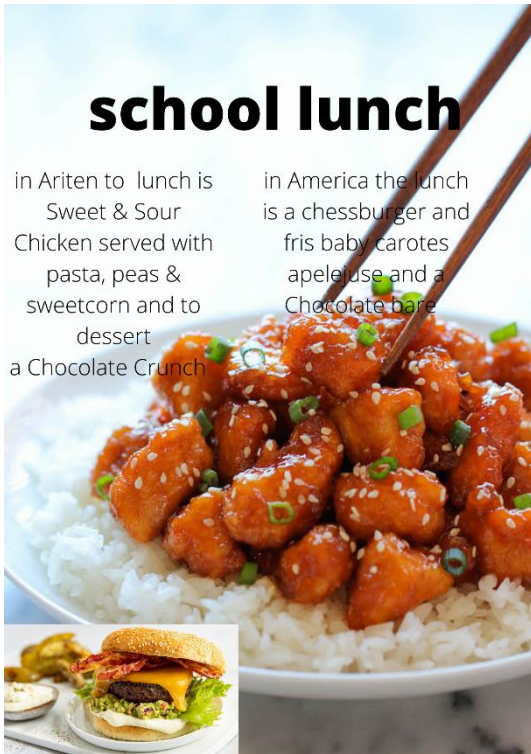


British School lunch

# school lunch

in Britain school lunch is Sweet & Sour Chicken served with pasta, peas & sweetcorn and to dessert a Chocolate Crunch

in America the lunch is a chesburger and fris baby carotes apele use and a Chocolate bare



# American and British school lunsj

## Similarities

Warm food  
Diffrent food every day

## Differences

British  
Healtay food  
Water  
Vegetarian / Vegan  
Dessert  
  
American  
Junk food  
Chocolate milk



## American school lunch

This is a typical american school lunch. It contains chocolate chip cookies, green peas, some fruit, mashed potatos and chicken nuggets.



The price is at \$4 for adults, and free for students.

## British school lunch

This is a typical british school lunch. It contains fish cakes, brussel sprouts, cabbage, rice with peas and yogurt with berries.



The price is at £2.30.

## American school lunch

Mini cheeseburgers  
Cheese pizza  
Yogurt and granola  
Baby carrots  
Corn rice krispie treats  
Cassorted fruit



## British school lunch

Chicken pie with creamed potatoes  
Italian pasta bake  
Jacket potato with various toppings  
Ham baguette



# Monday

A sandwich with cheese salad and ham. And a smoothie



To dessert a Self-saucing Jaffa pudding



# Monday

Hamburger with chicken meat cheese, salad, tomatoes and ketchup



To dessert some chocolate chip cookies



## British and American School lunch



American school lunch



American Dessert



British school lunch



British Dessert

## MENU: MONDAY



**PRICE:**  
**2.3€**

**PRICE:**  
**FREE**

