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"Reading the word & reading the world":
Promoting the Interdisciplinary Topics
in LK20 through Literature

"Reading the word & reading the world":
Bruk av skjønnlitteratur for å jobbe med
de tverrfaglige temaene i LK20

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"All the reading she had done had given her a view of life that they had never seen before"

Roald Dahl, Matilda

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Abstract in English

The new curriculum, LK20, has introduced three interdisciplinary topics that are to be integrated into all subjects: *health and life skills, democracy and citizenship,* and *sustainable development.* This thesis argues that literature is a valuable way of working with these topics in the English subject. Firstly, literature can promote Bildung and empathy, which can be argued to be essential life skills. Working with literature offers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of oneself, and of others. Based on Klafki's understanding of Bildung, the literary text itself can have a potential for Bildung (material), the technical skills of reading the literature can have potential for Bildung (formal), or exemplary learning through a literary text which combines the two can have potential for Bildung (categorial). The imaginative potential in literature gives students a chance to live someone else's reality and can therefore promote empathic abilities. As students learn to empathize with diverse others through literature, they could feel a sense of connection to others which could result in more emphatic citizens of the world. Secondly, literature can promote and develop intercultural competence and critical literacy. Multicultural literature offers students access to diverse cultures, and an opportunity for students to learn *about, through* and *for* intercultural encounters. This can then promote important democratic values and foster an inclusive environment. Furthermore, students must learn to keep a critical distance in their readings to expose the power structures that lies within texts. Developing students' critical literacy skills can be done by critically examine the literature and explore how it affects their own understandings and interpretations. Learning how to be emphatic, but critical individuals is essential for democratic citizenship. Thirdly, literature can contribute to develop students' environmental awareness and promote ecocriticism. The imaginative potential in literary texts, for example in dystopian fiction, can make students experience the consequences of the climate crisis, and develop environmental awareness. Further, ecocritical readings of and literary conversations about literary texts can bring out different perspectives and opinions on the environment, and contribute to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that align with Education for Sustainable Development. Lastly, teachers should be aware of the paradox that comes with teaching both normative attitudes, and at the same time fostering independent critical thinkers.

Key words: *life skills, democracy, citizenship, sustainable development, Bildung, empathy, intercultural competence, critical literacy, environmental awareness, ecocriticism, reading, literature*

Abstract in Norwegian

I det nye læreplanverket, LK20, er det introdusert tre tverrfaglige temaer som skal jobbes med i alle fag: *folkehelse og livsmestring, demokrati og medborgerskap,* og *bærekraftig utvikling.* I denne masteroppgaven argumenteres det for at bruk av skjønnlitteratur er en verdifull måte å jobbe med disse temaene i engelskfaget. For det første, kan skjønnlitteratur fremme danning og empati, som kan sies å være essensielle for å mestre egne liv. Litteraturarbeid kan gi elevene mulighet til å få en større forståelse av seg selv og av andre. I følge Klafki's forståelse av danning, eller Bildung, kan skjønnlitterære tekster fremme material danning ved at innholdet sees på som dannede i seg selv, eller formal danning ved at leseren utvikler ferdigheter for lesing, eller kategorial danning hvor læringen er eksemplarisk gjennom teksten som knyttes til elevenes liv. Forestillingspotensialet som ligger i skjønnlitteratur, gjør at elever kan leve gjennom andres virkelighet og derav utvikle empatiske evner. Å lære seg å føle empati for andre, særlig de som er ulike fra en selv, er en viktig del av å være en verdensborger. For det andre, kan skjønnlitteratur bidra til å utvikle interkulturell kompetanse og kritisk literacy. Bruk av multikulturell litteratur gir elevene tilgang til et mangfold av kulturer, som igjen åpner opp for å lære *om, for* og *gjennom* interkulturelle møter. Dette kan igjen fremme viktige demokratiske verdier og et inkluderende fellesskap. Videre må elever lære å møte tekster med en kritisk distanse, for å avsløre ulike maktforhold som finnes i teksten. Ved å kritisk utforske skjønnlitterære tekster, samt hva som kan påvirke leserens forståelse og tolkning, er en viktig egenskap innenfor demokratisk medborgerskap. For det tredje, kan skjønnlitteratur bidra til å utvikle miljøbevissthet og økokritiske ferdigheter. Forestillingspotensialet i litterære tekster, for eksempel i dystopisk fiksjon, gjør at elever kan se for seg fremtidige scenarioer som viser konsekvenser av klimakrisa, og derav utvikle deres miljøbevissthet. Økokritisk lesing av og økokritiske litteratursamtaler om skjønnlitterære tekster kan få frem ulike perspektiver og meninger, som kan bidra til å utvikle kunnskap, ferdigheter og holdninger som forenes Utdanning for Bærekraftig Utvikling. Til slutt er det viktig at lærere er bevisst på paradokset som kommer med å skulle utdanne elever med normative verdier og holdninger, men samtidig fremme selvstendige, kritiske tenkere.

Nøkkelord: *folkehelse og livsmestring, demokrati og medborgerskap, bærekraftig utvikling, danning, empati, interkulturell kompetanse, kritisk literacy, miljøbevissthet, økokritikk, lesing, skjønnlitteratur*

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

2020 was the year when a global pandemic became a reality. It showed us not only a health crisis, but an economic crisis, an education crisis, an inequality crisis and so much more. It was the year when people's mental health was challenged, with social distancing and lock downs. It was the year when democracy itself was challenged, when citizens' freedom was put in the hands of governments. It was the year when the sustainable development goals were set back 20 years (Mirchandan, 2020). 2020 was the year when the global society was put on one of its greatest tests.

2020 was also the year where one could see incredible solidarity across countries, communities and sectors. It has shown how the world can come together in a collective challenge. It has shown the interdependencies of the world's challenges and how they can affect the individual, the society and the environment. It has shown us that we are all the same regardless of our religion, culture, customs, whether we are poor or rich: the virus simply does not choose. It has shown us the weight of humanity and the strength that lies in being part of a community (Hadzipetrova, Mitrikeska, Maksimovski, & Kamcheva, 2020). Ultimately, 2020 has shown how important it is to be prepared for future challenges in which the world will continue to face.

The developments of society naturally affect the education system and continues to be reflected in the curricula. Many of the societal challenges that came with Covid-19, already existed before. People were struggling with their mental health. Resistance towards democratic values has been seen in several parts of the world. The climate crisis is at its breaking point if not being dealt with. The new curriculum in the Norwegian education system, LK20, has mirrored these current societal issues and implemented three interdisciplinary topics that were to be integrated into all subjects: *health and life skills, democracy and citizenship*, and *sustainable development*. According to LK20, "the knowledge base for finding solutions to problems can be found in many subjects, and the [interdisciplinary] topics must help the students to achieve understanding and see connections across subjects" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Moreover, these interdisciplinary topics should work as a way of thinking that goes beyond each subject, and how each subject

contributes to the goal of educating students as independent, active participants of society. In many ways, it represents the enormous responsibility that lies on the shoulders of teachers. However, it also represents the opportunities to bring relevant societal issues into each subject which will prepare students for life outside of the classroom.

Following this development, English as a school subject has become more than language learning. It can be argued that it has gone from developing the ability to participate in conversations and understanding English speaking people, to being one of the cornerstones of the objectives for education. Learning English as a lingua franca allows students to communicate across borders, opens for cultural understanding, and identity development (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). In the emphasis on educating the whole person, English as a school subject is central as the students are to be prepared for adulthood as citizens of the world. Moreover, it could be argued that teachers of English hold an essential role in meeting the objectives of education to "open doors to the world" and "develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can master their lives" (The Education Act, 1998).

PURPOSE OF THESIS

As a teacher of English there are many ways to incorporate the three interdisciplinary topics into the teaching practice. What this thesis does is to examine the use of literature to promote health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development in the English subject. In this thesis, I aim to present and discuss how these topics are intertwined and how working with literature can contribute to developing students' knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to make good life choices, for themselves and for others. By looking at previously written scholarly works, this thesis argues that *literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum*.

To make this argument, this thesis will be divided into three main chapters focused on each of the interdisciplinary topics. Before that, however, this introduction will present theoretical background related to literature and reading. Following that, it will give a short presentation on the role of literature in the English subject. From there, I will address the methodology used in this thesis and, finally, an outline of the three main chapters.

LITERATURE

Throughout this thesis, the term *literature* or *literary work* will appear several times. With literature I mean artistic literary work, including, but not limited to, novels, short stories, poems, picturebooks, lyrics, etc. However, literature can be understood as a piece of work, but it can also be understood in terms of how one responds to it. In other words, literature can be referred to as *what* is being read, but also *how* something is being read: literature understood as form, and literature understood as interaction.

LITERATURE AS FORM

Understanding literature as form is about understanding the traits of the text itself and how it is written. According to Winner (1982) there are three essential features that make up a literary text: the sound properties of words, metaphors and the structure of the text as a whole (in Wolf, 2004). The author's choice of sounds, metaphors and structure is rarely a coincidence, nevertheless the aim of a literary text is always to give the reader something to think about. According to Widdowson (1975), the aim of literary texts is to convey "an individual awareness of reality" (p. 70 in McKay, 2001, p. 319). The unique thing about literature is therefore that the what and the how of the text are inseparable. The *how* of literary texts is important in two ways: (1) how something is said often contributes to achieving the purpose of communication, and (2) how something is said communicates something about the person saying it; a voice is established (McKay, 2001). In other words, the form is important when conveying certain information. Furthermore, Kramsch (1993) defines literary texts by the authors' use of six aspects of text development. These include the shaping the medium of written texts, making grammatical and lexical choices which enables them to define spatial and temporal frames of reference, negotiating interpersonal relationships with their readers, looking through language to a believed world, evoking prior language, and lastly, leaving many things unsaid (in McKay, 2001, p. 320). These arguments support that literature can be understood as a form, or a genre, in other words *what* is being read.

LITERATURE AS INTERACTION

Understanding literature as interaction, is about recognizing the importance of the reader and what happens in the encounter between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt (1995) defines literary texts primarily by how readers interact with them. Her main argument is that a text is

simply ink on a piece of paper, until a reader interacts with it. Hence, the definition of a literary text is according to Rosenblatt not about the form of the text, but rather what a reader does in the different readings and how one responds to it. Wolf (2004) describes this interaction between the reader and the text as *uptake* or *engaging in* literature. Based on who you are, how you think and communicate with others, the words in a literary text move from the page and into our social world. In other words, "rather than simply reading and comprehending text on a basic level, we are actively constructing meaning" (Wolf, 2004).

Similarly, Attridge (2017) describes the reading of literature as an *act event.* By this he means that the literary text is firstly affected by the creative process and the cultural context of the author, and then again by the creative process and cultural context of the reader. Therefore, the reading process is also seen as an act, and the understanding of the text can change based on the experiences of the reader. In other words, the effect of the text can change as the reader changes. According to Attridge (2017) this is what makes the potential of the reading event never-ending. Attridge (2015) further argues that literature has an ability to take over the reader's feelings and thoughts as if it has its own agency. The reader responds passively to the author's work; however, the work only becomes active because of the reader's activity. Hence, the *act-event*. Furthermore, he argues that literature has an ability to change the reader, in which he describes as *otherness*. The ability to create unpredictable elements that can challenge the expectations and values of the reader, can contribute to widen the horizon and change his or her habits. According to Attridge (2015), if a reader is changed after reading a literary work, it is because of this otherness. Moreover, he believes that this change can happen without the reader being fully aware of it, as it can be an emotional, physical or intellectual act (Attridge, 2017, p. 26). As a result, literature can contribute to self-realization and new experiences. From this understanding, literature can be seen as the experience that occurs in the meeting between the reader and the text.

READING

Utdanningsdirektoratet (2012) defines reading as the ability to create meaning from different texts. As a basic skill, reading includes understanding, finding information, interpreting, reflecting on and assessing texts, as well as knowing what characterizes different texts. Essentially, being able to read is "a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for active participation in civic life" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012). The functional ability to read can be developed by reading a variety of texts and relating these to different types of information,

combined with the use of suitable reading strategies and complex reading tasks. In other words, functional reading is about using reading strategies appropriate to the purpose and type of text.

There are five basic skills defined in the current national curriculum, LK20, in which should be integrated into all subjects. These include reading, writing, numeracy, oral skills and digital skills, and they are all important for the overall learning process of all students. The basic skills are necessary tools for learning and will help students to become participating members of society, and part of shaping their identity. Every teacher is responsible for working with the basic skills in their subject, alongside developing students' subject competence (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

In addition to the definition of reading as a basic skill in LK20, reading in the English subject is also explained. In the English subject, reading means "understanding and reflecting on the content of various types of texts on paper and screen, and contributing to reading pleasure and language acquisition" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Moreover, developing reading skills in English includes, on one hand, working with phonemes and speech sounds, spelling patterns and syllables. On the other hand, it also includes reading various and complex texts with fluency and comprehension, and critically reflecting on and assessing them (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

Throughout the years and the developments of different curricula, the notion of reading in English as a foreign language has shifted. Bakken (2017) distinguishes between four main notions that can be identified in Norwegian curricula from 1939-2013: (1) Reading as exposure, (2) reading as a tool for practical language skills, (3) reading as encounter, and (4) reading as meta-awareness. Firstly, reading as exposure, means encouraging the students to "read as much English as possible" and the texts should be "easy enough to avoid having to translate them" (p. 8). Here, the reading should seek immediate understanding so that students can learn English by being exposed to and reading the written language. This notion of reading was emphasized in the curricula from 1930s-1950s. Secondly, reading as a tool for practical language skills, means to use written texts as examples to focus on pronunciation and language patterns. This pedagogy could be seen in the curricula in the 1960s-1970s, with a focus on extensive reading led by the teacher. Thirdly, reading as encounter involves the notion that the texts that students read should be meaningful and valuable to them. This language learning pedagogy puts the students more at the center. It is especially influenced by

Krashen (1982) who sees language as "innate in human beings, meaning that the individual subconsciously recognizes the structural elements of a language when exposed to it" (p. 11 in Bakken, 2017). Another influential scholar to the notion of reading as encounter is Holec (1981), emphasizing learner autonomy and "the capacity to control important aspects of one's language learning" (p. 3 in Bakken, 2017). Lastly, the notion of reading as meta-awareness came as a result of several factors. A combination of mediocre scores on the PISA test and new research that gave insight into the complexity of reading lead to the introduction of reading as a basic skill in LK06. Also, LK06 tied reading in the English in with recent decades' literacy discourses of social empowerment, where literacy "develops along a continuum, from basic reading and writing skills to a critical literacy that enables individuals to participate fully in society" (UNESCO, 2005). It could be argued that LK06 promoted reading as meta-awareness, enabling students to think critically and talk about texts and their contexts. As a result, the focus on the outcome of the reading was more emphasized than the spontaneous response (Bakken, 2017, pp. 11-15). These shifting notions of reading in the English subject show an intersection with the national discourses of democracy and social inclusion. Nevertheless, one can see in LK20 that "reading for enjoyment" gives an indication that the reading experience should be emphasized and focused on in the English subject, along with the reflections afterwards. Distinguishing between these different ways of reading, both while and after reading a text, can be related to Rosenblatt's (1995) understanding of *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading.

Rosenblatt (1995) distinguishes between *efferent* and *aesthetic* reading. She argues that the main purpose of efferent reading is for the reader to think about the message that can be carried away from the text *after* reading it. In contrast, in aesthetic reading the main concern is what happens *during* the reading process. According to Rosenblatt (1995) a text can be read either efferently or aesthetically. She further raises concerns that there is often a greater focus on efferent readings in literature classrooms, where students analyse the form of the text. Consequently, this could reduce learners' engagement with literature. Reading literature in the classroom offers a valuable way of working with both efferent and aesthetic readings. It could therefore be argued that the emphasis on both aspects of reading, in combination with the interdisciplinary topics, legitimizes the use of literature in the English subject and its valuable contribution in educating students to take part in a democratic society.

Literature has always had a central role in language learning pedagogy. It could be argued that language subjects, like English and Norwegian, have a responsibility, and opportunity, to bring literary works into the classroom. When working with literature, students are invited to practice many language skills, including reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas, and Tengberg (2019) have investigated the role of literature in the Norwegian subject. Firstly, literature is framed within a general genre discourse, where literary texts are used as examples to identify genre characteristics. Secondly, literature is often used for individual silent reading where students choose what they read, but this is rarely linked to explicit instruction. Such individual silent readings tend to result in a book report or an oral presentation, which focuses on presentation skills as much as on what was being read. Thirdly, literature instruction includes a "smaller degree of literary discussion, focused on developing and enriching students' understanding of particular works of literature" (Gabrielsen et al., 2019, p. 22). Lastly, and perhaps the most important finding, is that the teaching practices rarely frame literature as aesthetic or valuable in itself (Gabrielsen et al., 2019).

The findings of the study presented above can be transferrable and related to the English subject. Brevik and Lyngstad (2020) have examined the role of literature in the English classroom in Norway through three research projects. These include important aspects that all should be considered in the pedagogical and didactic thinking when working with literature: teachers' perspectives on the selection of literature, students' perspective on the reading of literature, and observations on what happens in the classroom where literature is used in the teaching practice. Brevik and Lyngstad (2020) argue that "the role of literature entails offering opportunities for personal interpretations and multiple perspectives in students' encounters with text" (p. 181). One of the findings show that the selection of literature is often done by teachers based on their knowledge of the students' skills and interests. The students are however seldom given the opportunity to choose literature to read, which perhaps differs from the Norwegian subject. This indicates a certain student-oriented approach, but without the freedom of choice. In other words, the room for free voluntary reading is not greatly prioritized in the English classrooms. One explanation to why the Norwegian subject offers more room for free voluntary readings, could be the number of hours given per week in contrast to the English subject. Another finding showed that when the students were given

time for free voluntary reading in class, they expressed an improvement in their reading skills and a motivation to keep reading literature in the future.

When examining the role of literature in the classroom, Brevik and Lyngstad (2020) observed three main teaching practices: 1) analytical approaches to understand genre and content, 2) experiential approaches to understanding themselves and other people, and 3) discussion-based approaches to compare literary texts and adaptions across media. The analytical approaches in the classrooms showed an emphasis on literary analysis and genre characteristics, such as setting, characters, turning points and themes, as well as literary devices typically associated with different genres. The students were also asked to move beyond purely describing the literature, to analysing it, for example by linking genre features and content. In other words, an analytical approach can be seen as an example of efferent reading. The experiential approaches included the personal reflections around the literary texts, which aims for students to relate to the text themselves, or to relate it to other people. In the study, the teacher instructed the students to play out an authentic situation based on a literary text, complemented by a writing task which mirrored real world written communication. These findings show that the experiential approach where students were given the opportunity to understand oneself and other people through literature, was found more engaging than the analytical approaches. This engagement with the text can be an example of aesthetic reading. The discussion-based approach was shown to be most used by the teachers who participated in the study. This involved mostly comparing literary texts across media, such as reading a text and then showing a film adaption or reading a musical script and then watching a music video. Further, the discussion-based approach included classroom talks between the teacher and the students, as preparation for an upcoming exam. For example, one of the teachers in the study prompted a discussion around the short story "The Sniper", where the students were encouraged to analyse and think independently about the deeper meaning of the text in order to understand its historical context. The teacher encouraged multiple perspectives in the discussions about themes and prompted the students to elaborate on their answers. Accordingly, several students were encouraged to participate in a literary discussion where the teacher accepted multiple opinions. Based on this study, Brevik and Lyngstad (2020) argue that it could be beneficial to offer a balance between a primary focus on text (analytical approach) and a combined focus on the text and the reader (experiential approach) to develop the students' joy of reading. They also suggest that teachers should move beyond the analytical and experiential approaches when teaching

literature, to distil possible, creative strategies related to different genres. According to Brevik and Lyngstad (2020), this practice is more in line with the new concept of "competence" in the core curriculum (NDET, 2017 in Brevik & Lyngstad, 2020, p. 185).

As this thesis argues, literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in LK20. The shifting notions of reading show that the emphasis on the aesthetic reading experience comes to light in the new curriculum. Aesthetic reading of literary texts holds a central role in developing important competencies related to students' life skills, democratic citizenship and sustainable development. Hence, it should be incorporated as a natural aspect when working with literary texts, in alignment with efferent readings of them. The role of literature in the English subject could therefore be argued to be central when working towards the objectives of education and fostering students who are prepared for life outside of the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this thesis is argumentative, as it argues that ***literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum***. The data in which this thesis builds upon is previously written scholarly work in combination with other relevant sources. This thesis is not based on one single scientific research method, but rather an approach towards finding relevant research and theoretical framework that supports this argument. Hence, this section will present the approach used in developing the argument. Firstly, I will present the idea behind the thesis and explain how the structure of the chapters affected the search strategy. Then, I will present the search strategy, including which data bases and other sources were used and which search words were applied to find relevant material. Lastly, I will assess the validity and reliability of this thesis before presenting an outline for the thesis.

According to Ruth-Sahd & King (2006) "originality rarely means starting from scratch, but looking to expand that which is already known" (in Bolderston, 2008, p. 91). In this thesis, I wanted to examine how literature could promote the interdisciplinary topics *health and life skills, democracy and citizenship* and *sustainable development* in the English subject. My initial thought was that these topics were probably well represented in literature, but perhaps not connected explicitly to LK20. Hence, I saw a great opportunity to use established literature on the topics and bring them all together in my MA thesis and provide an overview

on how they are interconnected and how literature is a valuable way of working with these topics in the classroom.

Early in the process, I recognized the importance of having a structure of the thesis. I therefore decided to have the same structure in all the main chapters:

- **Introduction** to present the interdisciplinary topic and its relevance
- **Presentation of how LK20 defines the interdisciplinary topic** in the core curriculum and in the English subject
- **Theory** on the interdisciplinary topic, following by theoretical framework of each subcategory. For each chapter I chose two main aspects within the interdisciplinary topic, which was based on what I found in searching process. In health and life skills, the subcategories chosen were Bildung and empathy. In democracy and citizenship, the subcategories chosen were intercultural competence and critical literacy. And in sustainable development, the subcategories chosen were environmental awareness and ecocriticism.
- **Findings and discussion** on how the use literature can promote the interdisciplinary topic, in relevance to each of the two subcategories. In the last section of the findings and discussion, I use the picturebook *The Giving Tree* as an example of literature that is suitable for working with each interdisciplinary topic. The choice of using the same picturebook for all three chapters was to illustrate that one piece of literature can be read for several purposes. Additionally, it is there to emphasize how the interdisciplinary topics are intertwined, and that often if working with one topic means working with the other two as well.
- **Conclusion** to sum up the main points of the chapter

The structure presented above is to be seen in all three main chapters and was chosen to make the thesis more cohesive. By deciding this structure early in the process, it affected the search strategy. In other words, the searching process could then be organized into steps, where it started with the curriculum, and then moved to the theoretical background of the topics, and then discussing literature's role in promoting these in the English subject. Lastly, my thought was to bring the theory into a practical example. Hence, the choice of including a specific literary text and relate this to the discussion. However, the path of the searching process was more circuitous, rather than linear, as I often needed to revisit my search results if new ideas came up along the way (Bolderston, 2008).

The first step of the search strategy was to start by looking at the new curriculum. The three interdisciplinary topics are all presented and defined in the LK20, and it was therefore natural to start my research by looking at what LK20 defined them as. From this point, the

curriculum's definitions lead me to examine relevant search words that would present relevant theory on the three topics. I chose to use Oria as the primary database, where I knew there would be many relevant academic articles on the topics that I would access as a student at OsloMet. Oria connects to the online collection of the National Library of Norway, which steered me in the direction of many relevant journals, books and articles. My sources were mainly online sources, due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic that closed the school library. However, I do not feel as if this has affected the overall quality of my work, because many of the books were also available as online books. Furthermore, I used Google scholar to complement with other relevant sources that might not appear in Oria. This was to ensure that I got a more widespread overview of previously written scholarly work. Because the topics discussed in this thesis are highly relevant societal issues, I chose to look at websites of organisations that I knew would have relevant information. Examples of these are World Health Organisation, UNICEF, UNESCO, United Nations etc. These were all natural to investigate when searching for information about the topic of health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development.

As I was looking through these different databases and reading relevant articles, it became clear what the subcategories I wanted to include in my thesis. I initially started the search with general search words, for example "democracy" and "citizenship", or other synonyms. And as I read these articles, it became evident that an important aspect of democracy is "intercultural competence". From then, the search words became more specific to the subcategories with different combinations. In the rubric below I have listed some of the search words that were used. Other relevant resources were also found by looking at the reference lists of the work I read.

Reading, literature, ESL/EFL, teaching, didactics, fiction, novels, short stories, picturebooks, poetry, language learning, basic skills, literacy, linguistics, sustainable development, democracy and citizenship, life skills, LK20, inclusive education, narrative competence, understanding fiction, meaning-making, historical fiction, eco-criticism, environmental awareness, environmentalism, civics/government, representation, critical literacy, young adult literature, tweens, middle years literature, ecocritical reading, ecocriticism, emotional literacy, literary interpretation, reader response, literary competence, intercultural competence, aesthetic reading, efferent reading, literary texts, empathy.

In the discussions, I had already gained some background knowledge of literature and reading literature in the classroom – which is presented earlier in this introductory chapter. As I found

more theoretical background on the topics, I could connect this to the use of literature and support these arguments with articles and studies done on literature and each topic. Working through each chapter one by one, it became clearer and clearer how these topics are connected to each other. At some point it was a challenge not to use the same arguments, as they were relevant in all the three topics. However, this only pointed out my initial argument of their interconnection, and the similar arguments is an essential finding in this matter.

Although this thesis is argumentative, it was important for med to consider its reliability and validity. In order to ensure the reliability of this thesis, I took time in the preparation process and read as much as possible on the topics. By doing this I found out which theories or theorists were mostly referenced in relation to each topic, which gave me an indication on what I should base my argumentations on and whether they were trustworthy. To secure the quality of information or articles, I used peer reviewed sources and preferably recently written work. However, I made sure to include older work of central scholars within the field, because these were often referred to in the newer sources. Additionally, when using other people's work as primary sources, it was crucial to refer to them in the text correctly. To ensure the thesis' validity, it was important to make sure the discussions always could relate back to the curriculum and its definition on the topic. By gaining a theoretical overview of the interdisciplinary topics in combination with theory on the use of literature in the classroom, I believe it is a valuable contribution for further research. Recommendations for further research will however be given in the conclusion of this thesis.

THESIS OUTLINE

As stated above, this thesis is structured into three main chapters. The chapters are organized according to how LK20 presents the interdisciplinary topics and the order which they appear in the curriculum. The first chapter focuses on health and life skills & literature, the second chapter focuses on democracy and citizenship & literature, and the third chapter focuses on sustainable development & literature. One could argue that it is not a random order, as they naturally build on each other – from a primarily focus on the individual, to a focus on the individual as a part of society, and then to a focus on the individual as both part of society and nature.

CHAPTER I: HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS & LITERATURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

An essential part of a teacher's job is to educate students to become independent individuals, and to make sure they gain the skills, knowledge and values they will need as participating members of society. In the new curriculum, LK20, *health and life skills* has been introduced as one of the interdisciplinary topics, which mirrors these important aspects of the school's mission. Essentially, students should be educated to make good life choices and prepare them for adulthood.

Health and life skills has secured a central place in the new curriculum, as it should be integrated into all subjects. This ensures a new and much needed focus on educating the whole person and fostering the value of what each student can contribute with in society. In other words, the students should be taught to see their own value, and the value they have in their community.

The global world which we are a part of forces us to interact with people of different cultures. Naturally, navigating in this multicultural world is an important aspect of health and life skills that must be included when working with this topic. The teaching should include aspects which concern each individual, as well as the collective cultural aspect that fosters the values of a democratic society.

There are countless ways of working with health and life skills in the classroom. However, this chapter will focus on the benefits of using literature in the English subject to develop these skills. Firstly, I will present how the new curriculum defines health and life skills. Secondly, I will present relevant theoretical framework related to health and life skills. Naturally, there are many relevant aspects, however due to the scope of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the concept of *Bildung* and *empathy* when diving deeper into the essence of health and life skills. I will then present my findings and discuss the benefits of using literature to promote and develop Bildung and empathy. Lastly, I will use the picturebook *The Giving Tree* as a practical example of working with literature to promote health and life skills in the English subject.

1.2 HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS IN LK20

In the core curriculum of LK20, it is stated that the interdisciplinary topic *health and life skills* should give the students competence which "promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). This entails developing a positive self-image and a confident identity, and an understanding of factors that are important for mastering one's own life – individually and as a member of society – and being able to influence these. By working with this interdisciplinary topic, the students should learn to deal with personal and practical challenges and successes in the best way possible.

There are several areas within health and life skills that are relevant to work with, such as physical and mental health, sexuality, gender, drug abuse, media use, media consumption, and personal economy. Moreover, it includes "value choices, the importance of meaning in life and relations with others, the ability to draw boundaries and to respect others' boundaries, and the ability to deal with thoughts, feelings and relationships" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

In the English subject, health and life skills refers to being able to express one's own feelings, thoughts, experiences and opinions in writing and orally in English. This forms a basis on which one could "provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns, as well as on the pupils' own way of life and that of others" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Furthermore, by developing such linguistic and cultural competence to handle different situations, students may enhance their self-image and identity.

The core curriculum of LK20 also refers to § 1-1 in the Education Act, whereas a central objective of education is for the students "to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can master their lives and can take part in working life and society" (The Education Act, 1998). In other words, the students have a legal right to a health and life skills-education.

1.3 THEORY

Based on what LK20 refers to as health and life skills, I will in the following section present relevant theory which the discussion will draw upon. In the first section, I will present other aspects of health and life skills, followed by theoretical framework related to the concept of Bildung and empathy.

According to World Health Organization (2020) life skills are "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (p. 17). Furthermore, the core set of skills which promote the health and well-being of young people include decision-making and problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, communication and interpersonal relationships, self-awareness and empathy, and coping with stress and emotion. These skills are important, as they can provide a better understanding of oneself and others and make good choices in their lives. Essentially, developing life skills may help young people become more aware of "what they are doing, how they are doing things, how they obtain information and other people and how they think, feel and behave" (World Health Organization, 2020, pp. 17-18).

There has been an increased focus on young people's mental health and the notion that it is as important to promote good mental health as physical health. Moreover, defining good health as what resources a person has for living a good life and making good choices, rather than simply absence of sickness, is therefore closely connected to health and life skills (Uthus, 2017, p. 18).

When it comes to education, preparing students for a life outside of school is one of the most important tasks of a teacher. In other words, developing life skills which bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood is vitally important (Tørnby, 2020). Moreover, the students should be met with clear expectations and helped to deal with successes and adversity. In order to do so, they must be provided with a safe and inclusive environment and be given equal opportunity for personal development (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020).

Other aspects of life skills are those connected to being a global citizen. Olds and Green (2012) argue that global citizenship skills should include "linking local and global issues, practicing empathy, making informed, ethical decisions, and participating in the social and political life of one's community." (in Edgar, 2020, p. 68). Naturally, the English subject holds an important position when it comes to developing students' life skills, as the English-speaking world has become more and more integrated into our everyday lives.

Following what LK20 and the previous section presents as health and life skills, it is appropriate to draw lines to the concept of *Bildung*. The Norwegian school's mission is the education and all-round development of all students. Education is therefore "an important part of a lifelong process which has the individual's all-round development, intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility and compassion for others as its goal" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). In other words, this dual mission shall give students a solid foundation to understand themselves, others and the world, and making good choices – hence life skills. Furthermore, the all-round education occurs when students acquire knowledge about and insight into the world in which they are a part, including environmental, linguistic, historical, societal, cultural and religious aspects (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

The Norwegian terminology "*danning*" (all-round development), builds on the concept of educative self-formation, often referred to as Bildung. In the classic sense, Bildung is about "human freedom enacted with responsibility for self and others in the open-ended project of self-creation" (Bleicher, 2006, p. 365). Furthermore, it is based on sound judgement of what is appropriate, indicated by an integration of thinking, willing and feeling; expressed in good taste and a sense of community. An important aspect of Bildung is an openness to difference and a willingness to self-correct in different cultural situations (Bleicher, 2006).

It could be argued that the concept of Bildung focuses on personal growth, however according to Hoff (2014) the focus cannot only be on the individual. The focus must also be on the cultural and social aspects, because the individual always understands himself or herself in relation to others (p. 509). In other words, Bildung is a process which occurs in the meeting between an individual's subjective prerequisites and experiences and a culturally expressed outside world. For this reason, it is hard to give a single definition of the term, because the meaning of Bildung depends on the cultural context. Moreover, what is seen as Bildung in one society is not necessarily the same in another. At the same time, it is not a static concept as the perception of it may also change over time. For example, being "dannet" in Norway a hundred years ago, meant being "cultured"; someone who had knowledge of high culture. Whereas today the term Bildung entails shaping an individual within a certain society, and therefore being "dannet" is always "dannet" *for us* – as a reflection of a time, place, customs and norms (Straume, 2013, p. 17). In today's globalised world, people constantly interact with people of different cultural backgrounds. This ability to effectively function across cultures,

can be defined as *intercultural competence*. Although this is another important aspect of Bildung, the aspect of intercultural competence will be given more focus in the next chapter of this thesis, related to *democracy and citizenship*. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning this perspective and keep the aspect of intercultural competence in mind when talking about promoting Bildung.

According to Aase (1988) Bildung must concern being socialized into a way of thinking and a culture that our society sees as valuable. Moreover, it must be about how individuals are not only a product of this culture, but to a degree is independent from it (p. 23 in Norendal, 2016). This could be related to how Nordstoga (2014) explains the concept of Bildung; that the process entails the ability to step out of one's own position when met with unfamiliar situations. As a result, one will be able to step into something else with "a new perspective, a new insight and a deeper understanding" (p. 12 in Norendal, 2016, own translation). However, Hellesnes (2005) believes that Bildung is not only about understanding, but also about maintaining a critical position in this meeting. Therefore, according to Hellesnes (2005), "Bildung belongs to the group of terminology in which includes emancipation, critical reasoning and individual autonomy" (p. 28 in Norendal, 2016, own translation).

In pedagogical point of view, Klafki (1996) offers three categories of Bildung: *material, formal* and *categorial.* Firstly, material Bildung is based on *what* the students should learn from, which can be seen as the objective content. This category focuses more on information the learner needs to attain which is considered "absolute" (Klafki, 1996, p. 173) and less on developing and expressing personal opinions and critical thought. Examples within this category are activities such as drilling, memorizing and reproducing what one has learnt from different content, for example a written text. In other words, it is the canonical content being taught that promotes the process of material Bildung according to this tradition. Secondly, formal Bildung concerns the learner and the subjective aspect where personal development is the goal. Bildung is from this point of view achieved by developing different skills, ways of thinking and values. Learning strategies and meta-learning belong to this category, as well as learning how to master different tools such as a dictionary. With younger learners this would include the decoding process of reading for example. According to Klafki (1965), it is when these abilities are developed, so that they can be used in new situations and in the meeting with new content, that the students will be prepared for adulthood and challenges later in life (p. 32 in Straum, 2018). Lastly, categorial Bildung is a combination material and formal Bildung. Whereas material Bildung lacks reflection around content, the formal Bildung lacks

content to reflect about. According to Klafki (1965) the process of Bildung is a two-sided dialectic process between the subject (student) and object (content) and that these two are intertwined (pp. 38-39 in Straum, 2018). In other words, Bildung is not only learning about something, but also learning from and through something.

With this holistic view on Bildung, Klafki (1996) believes that the learning should be *exemplary*. Exemplary learning is according to Klafki (1996) both subjective and objective. The reality of the objective content opens up to the learner, and at the same time the subjective learner opens up to the reality of the content. Moreover, the students should learn through examples, where they go from something specific, to learn something general. Therefore, the selection of the exemplary content is essential. To promote categorial Bildung, the content must be engaging and interesting to the students, as well as opening their world view and feel relevant to their lives (Klafki, 1996, p. 189). Moreover, the learner's personal experience, dialogue and negotiation are important for categorial Bildung to happen. Through exemplary learning, students are able to see the interrelationship between different subjects and compare them in a way that strengthens independent learning – which points to the essence of the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills.

1.3.3 EMPATHY

Another important aspect to be drawn from health and life skills, and that is closely connected to the concept of Bildung, is empathy. In order to "provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns, as well as on the pupils' own way of life and that of others" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b), developing a sense of empathy could be seen as essential when working with this interdisciplinary topic.

Empathy can be understood in many ways, depending on which context it is to be understood in. However, a general understanding of the term is according to World Health Organization (2020) the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we might not be familiar with. To empathize could be defined as the ability "to adapt a different point of vantage on the actual or fictional world" and "to regard that world from the perspective of certain beliefs and thoughts and predilections, just the beliefs and thoughts a character is imagined to have or a person is believed to possess" (Dadlez, 1997, p. 7 in Molnes, 2019, p. 15). Furthermore, empathy is about imagining having those thoughts and beliefs, and then to imagine believing what and as someone from this point of vantage does.

The mental process of putting oneself in someone else's shoes, can be referred to as *mentalization.* Simply put, mentalization is about interpreting the mental state and making sense of others and ourselves. This process is central in all human interactions, including pedagogy, and it is about the ability and willingness to seek understanding of one's own and others' thoughts and feelings. In other words, it includes an awareness and an attitude whereas actions and behaviours are seen as motivated from certain beliefs, feelings and thoughts (Bateman & Fonagy, 2007, p. 1 in Hjaltadottir, 2017, p. 62). Moreover, mentalization promotes a curiosity towards others' mental states and how one can experience reality in different ways (Skårderud & Sommerfeldt, 2008 in Martinsen, 2019, p. 58). It could be argued that one needs an ability to understand others in order to understand oneself, and consequently realize the reality of being one person in a world full of individuals (Martinsen, 2019, p. 15).

Empathy is also about navigating in a world full of emotions. Understanding how others feel can also be referred to as emotional literacy. There is however a difference between acknowledging someone's emotions – sympathy – and feeling empathy. Developing empathy could be seen as a demanding, never ending process, and some may also argue that the ability to feel empathy is more or less impossible (Slaby, 2014 in Tørnby, 2020, p. 132). In other words, it could be argued whether or not it is possible to fully put oneself in other's shoes, due to the inevitable subjective position one brings into every situation. It is therefore important to distinguish between sympathy and empathy, as the latter could involve "entertaining the thought of another's situation and feelings exclusively from one's *own* perspective" (Dadlez, 1997, p. 169 in Molnes, 2019, p. 15).

According to Nussbaum (1997), empathy and citizenship are closely connected. Being a global citizen entails that one not only needs knowledge about different people and cultures, but also the ability to put oneself in another person's situation. Moreover, it is about being able to imagine how others experience or feel in a given situation, for example when losing a loved one or living in poverty. Developing a sense of empathy is therefore an essential part of being a citizen (Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 85-89). Edgar (2020) also highlights the importance of developing empathy as a global citizen: "Global citizenship requires that individuals see the diversity and complexity of different subject positions in the world, and their development of empathy helps to foster consideration of the impact they have on the larger global community" (p. 72).

1.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

So far, I have presented relevant theoretical framework which the following section will be build upon. As this thesis argues, literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum. The following section will include the findings and discussion on why literature is a valuable way of working with health and life skills, with a main focus on Bildung and empathy.

1.4.1 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE BILDUNG

Using literary texts to learn about other cultures has a tradition of being a central approach to promote Bildung in EFL classrooms (Fenner, 2020). By reading authentic texts from different genres that engage personal encounters with the targeted culture, students gain knowledge from subjective experiences in cultural contexts (Fenner, 2012, p. 376 in Molnes, 2019). Furthermore, working with literature is also an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of oneself and developing an identity both as an individual and as a member of a collective society. The following sections will focus on Klafki's understandings of Bildung from a pedagogical perspective and discuss the role of literature when promoting material, formal and categorial Bildung in the English subject.

LITERATURE AND MATERIAL BILDUNG

Looking from the perspective of material Bildung, literature as the objective content may offer many benefits. It could be argued that students should in fact be exposed to certain canonical texts and that this is an important aspect when promoting Bildung. Although the current curricula does not define any official canonical literary works, Martinsen (2019) argues that there is a form of hidden canonisation where teachers select literature they believe is still relevant. It is important, however, to keep in mind that every teacher brings his or her own background and culture when selecting literary texts to teach. As a result, many students are exposed to what can be considered such hidden canons, there could be others who are not.

On one hand, there are fruitful arguments as to why there should not be a set reading list that students must read throughout their education. Firstly, it would be problematic to have a static definition of what literary texts should mirror cultural aspects of society, as this means other aspects are excluded. Therefore, it is an impossible, and perhaps a wrongful task, to decide what literary works should be kept and considered more valuable for cultural development.

Secondly, a curriculum is often a reflection of the culture and values from the perspective of the given society. Hence, defining canonical literature that reflect a multicultural society and develop global citizens is more or less possible. On the other hand, securing some literary texts that all students must work with could promote inclusion and a sense of belonging. Moreover, it could offer a common frame of references which is central when in the meeting with other cultures and understanding one's own subjectivity – hence important when promoting Bildung (Martinsen, 2019, pp. 67-69).

The English subject includes reading different literary texts, which may be selected due to its cultural or historical value in terms of form and content. These could range from classical works of literature such as those written by William Shakespeare, to modern literature such as *Harry Potter* or *The Hate U Give*. Moreover, there are literary texts that keep appearing in ESL classrooms, either chosen by the teacher or found in English language textbooks, due to a common understanding that these are valuable to teach. The meaning-making that happens in the interaction between the reader and the text is not the main focus from a material Bildung-point of view. However, it is the value of the text itself and what students can learn from it, before subjective interpretations, that is considered a contribution for Bildung in this tradition.

LITERATURE AND FORMAL BILDUNG

When it comes to formal Bildung and literature, it could be understood as the technical skills of or the thought processes behind reading literary texts. The main focus from this point of view is on the subjective reader and how Bildung is promoted within this individual – regardless of which literary text is read. To discuss how literature can promote formal Bildung, it is valuable to emphasize the development of fictive reading competence.

Referring back to Steffensen (2000) and his perspective on literature, he believes that it is not the characteristics of the text that decides the genre, but the reader's interpretation of the genre that decides how the text is read. In other words, it could be argued that in order to promote formal Bildung one must develop the ability to read texts fictively – hereby referred to as fictive reading competence. Fictive reading competence can be related to Rosenblatt and her transactional reader-response theory. She argues that the creation of a literary work happens in the transaction between the reader and the text, and that this transaction occurs when the text is read aesthetically. Although Rosenblatt believes the text is important as well, she argues for the importance of developing skills to approach texts in different ways to create

different meanings (Rosenblatt, 1995). Fictive reading competence can in this case be connected to a form of aesthetic reading.

A prerequisite for developing fictive reading competence is a meta-awareness to recognize the traits of a text that tells the reader it is a work of fiction, and thereby adjust and activate one's pre-knowledge (Penne, 2010). In this case, it is according to Steffensen (2000) necessary to set aside the author's motive when seeking to understand the content. This meta-awareness is essential when interpreting the text and understanding it as fiction; something that is made up and not based on facts. The opposite in this matter, is to read literary texts as factual texts, but this entails creating meaning only from one's own viewpoint and the perceived reality (Hennig, 2017).

Furthermore, Steffensen (2000) argues that fictive reading competence is about seeing a text as something more than a narrative structure. It is about understanding literary devices such as composition, point of view, and the use of symbols. This means that students should be made aware the ambiguity of literature and attain knowledge of the literary devices which makes this ambiguity possible (Hennig, 2017). Essentially, being able to experience and create meaning from literary texts, students must *learn* how to read a text in a fictive way. Steffensen (2000) argues in this case for the importance of reading literature in school, where the teacher can help guide the students with what questions should be raised towards the text that can lead to a fictive way of reading.

Developing a fictive reading competence may contribute to develop students' meta-awareness that different texts must be treated in different ways. In today's society, this awareness is essential, as the line between fiction and non-fiction has been blurred through blogs, reality-shows, and of course fake news. The ability to approach texts with a critical, exploratory, and questioning attitude, as well as considering the text's purpose, sender, underlying ideologies and motives when assessing the truth of the text up against what is otherwise considered true, can be referred to as critical literacy (Blikstad-Balas, 2016). Fictive reading competence from a critical literacy perspective will be touched more upon in the next chapter of this thesis, in relevance to *democracy and citizenship*. However, navigating between different discourses and contexts that require both fictive and factual reading competence – sometimes at the same time – is an important life skill that students must learn, hence the importance of bringing this to light in this chapter as well.

From the perspective of categorial Bildung, literature offers a great potential for students to learn from and through a literary text. As Klafki (1996) argues, the learning should be *exemplary* where students learn from something specific to learn something general. From this point of view, both the selection of literature and creating an environment where students can express their thoughts, perspectives and interpretations of the text are essential. It could therefore be argued that literary conversations in the classroom can be a valuable way of promoting categorial Bildung in the English subject.

According to Fenner (2012) reading a text within foreign language learning should be regarded as a dialogic process (in Molnes, 2019, p. 14). In other words, the meaning of the text is not in the text itself but is created through dialogue and sharing. The text then functions as a voice of the given culture and the reader is influenced by the encountered culture as well as the culture is influenced by the reader's interpretation of it in this dialogue. From this perspective, culture must be seen as dynamic, because it may change through processes of interpreting, creating meaning, communicating and reflecting (Fenner, 2012, pp. 376-377 in Molnes, 2019, p. 14). Through dialogue, in this case a literary conversation, the teacher invites the students into a "community of interpretation". Each student brings previous knowledge and experiences into the interpretation, which may be fruitful for developing new meanings in the dialogue between the text and the reader (Fenner, 2020).

In order to promote categorial Bildung, the teacher should introduce the students to literature that contains cultural diversity and encourages them to think critically about the text in relation to their own perceptions of the world – and more importantly expanding their worldview. Literary conversations allow students to express their thoughts on the text, and about themselves and their own lives. Moreover, the teacher must facilitate a dialogue in the classroom that encourages the students to participate in the conversation, meet counterarguments and new perspectives (Aase, 2005, p. 39). When the language, form and content of the text is being made visible to the students, and they are active participants in the conversation, it may contribute to Bildung.

Literary conversations entail sharing reading experiences and investigating the language, form and content of the literary text. However, it is when the students are forced to stop and reflect upon the text while reading, as well as being met with others' experiences with the text afterwards, that the potential for Bildung is present (Aase, 2005). Skaftun & Michelsen (2017)

argues that reading literature is a process of meaning-making, where the students bring their previous understandings into their interpretations of the text to create meaning (in Furu & Rørnes, 2019, p. 16). If a literary conversation is facilitated in a meaningful way, the students are given an opportunity to practice and develop their language and express their interpretations and opinions. Additionally, their language repertoire could expand from using their everyday language to include a more academic language as they get more comfortable.

A prerequisite for students to engage in such conversations and daring to share their thoughts, is an environment within the classroom which encourages discussions where there is not one single answer (Skaftun & Michelsen, 2017, p. 230 in Furu & Rørnes, 2019, p. 16). By asking open-ended and authentic questions, and following up on the students' answers, the teacher signals that their responses are important. This is a form of *uptake* (Attridge, 2017; Wolf, 2004) where the conversation keeps moving forward, rather than if the student responses were being met with simply "good" or "well done". As mentioned before, every student will have different interpretations of a literary text, and if they experience that their responses are valuable, it will give them confidence (Martinsen, 2019). In other words, if the students experience that their thoughts and opinions are of value, it could contribute to Bildung, as is encourages the students to become independent thinkers and to reflect upon questions that they can relate to their own lives.

Moving from direct responses while reading, to a literary conversation afterwards is a way of bringing the immediate reactions and experiences into something more. A class dialogue may challenge the students' subjective interpretations and bring about the different readings of the text. Talking about these differences offers an opportunity to reflect upon one's own reading as well as what the text is conveying and how (Aase, 2005). The value of being confronted with other people's readings is highlighted by Rosenblatt (1995), as it contributes to the exploration of one's own interpretation, opinions and values. According to Rosenblatt (1995) the meaning-making of the text, and what makes it literary, happens through the transaction between the text and the reader. Therefore, one can learn as much about the text as the reader itself. By exploring the different readings in a literary conversation, the students will on one hand have to go back to the text to see if their interpretation is supported by it. On the other hand, they will have to explore their internal framework, their attitudes, beliefs and values, that make up their interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1995). It is this bridge between the text and the reader, combined with the confrontation of others' interpretations and thoughts that can be argued to promote categorial Bildung.

In order to assess the potential for Bildung through the use of literary conversations, there are two factors to consider: whether the text that the conversation is based upon has a potential for Bildung, and if the conversation in itself has a potential for Bildung (Ulland, 2016). When it comes to the text, Ulland (2016) argues that the potential lies in the author's use of theme and literary devices. The theme could develop the students' ethical judgement, and the literary devices could develop their aesthetic, literary understanding – or as mentioned in the section above, their *fictive reading competence*. As for the conversation itself, the students are given access to other people's thoughts and feelings, which may affect the way they see themselves and others. Having to go back to the text and meet other voices and interpretations in the conversation, some they might also disagree with, the students are challenged in their own set of beliefs, values and opinions. The literary conversation may contribute to Bildung because it is an opportunity to practice and develop a sense of ethical and aesthetical judgement, which are important life skills (Ulland, 2016, pp. 16-18).

Ultimately, the teacher holds a crucial role when it comes to the potential of promoting Bildung through literary conversations. It is the teacher who is responsible to create a community of interpretation, as well as presenting literature that provokes the students into conversation (Edgar, 2020, p. 67). Seen through the lens of Klafki's categorial Bildung, where the objective content should be opened to the subjective reader – the teacher is responsible to open up the text and facilitate a conversation where the students then can open up to the reality of the text. By asking authentic questions, describing what could be seen, making connections, building on the students' responses, and pointing out observations, the teacher guides the students in the conversation in a meaningful way. This entails ensuring a conversation where the students are encouraged to negotiate different interpretations of the text, arguing their viewpoint and learning to meet other perspectives with a critical distance (Sande, 2020). Moreover, the aim is not necessarily to end up with a single understanding of the text, which could be argued to be the very essence of what could promote Bildung.

Using a literary text to exemplify a certain situation or dilemma that the students must take a stance on, for example through a fictive character in the story, is a valuable way of working with Bildung and life skills. Hence, from a specific example, to a general life lesson. If, or rather when, the students are faced with a similar situation in their own lives, they can recognise their own thoughts, beliefs and values and act as a morally, responsible individual (Ulland, 2016).

1.4.2 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE EMPATHY

As stated in the theoretical framework of this chapter, developing empathy is an important aspect of both Bildung, and therefore also the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills. The basic understanding of empathy is to imagine being in someone else's shoes – what they are thinking, how they are feeling and why they act as they do. Using literature to present students with other realities than their own could therefore be argued to be a valuable way of promoting empathy.

Relating back to mentalization, Zunshine (2006) refers to reading literature as a "cognitive workout" (p. 159). She argues that literature both utilizes and challenges the cognitive abilities of mentally putting oneself in someone else's shoes, and that these abilities are activated and trained through reading. Zunshine (2006) connects mentalization to a meta-understanding. The ability to mentalize entails imagining being someone else, but at the same time being aware that it is in fact *one's own* imagination (p. 53). One can say that mentalization in itself is indeed fiction, because it presumes that we know all along that our assumptions of the fictive characters' internal lives is our subjective assumptions. It is about having an awareness and keeping track of the source of our interpretations, as well as the source of interpretation from the characters' perspectives, and assess these from the given context. Ultimately, literary texts work as experiments to the human cognition, and challenge us to develop. From Zunshine's (2006) point of view, these abilities must be taken into use in order to develop – almost like training a muscle – and therefore highlight the importance of reading literature. This is also supported by Langer (2011) who argues that developing a way of thinking that includes personal meaning and experience, as well as a consideration of the world outside oneself, together "they invite a fuller and more complex understanding" (p. 8 in Hjaltadottir, 2017, p. 72). The opportunity for mentalization that literature offers, revolves around expanding our understanding of the world, of others and of ourselves, and "leaving room for alternative interpretations, critical readings, changing point of view, complex characterizations, and unresolved questions" (Langer, 2011, p. 32 in Hjaltadottir, 2017, p. 72).

When people read fiction, and they are emotionally transported into the story, they become more empathic. (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). Reading about the thoughts and feelings of fictional characters may be experienced as if they were real, and one can understand the emotions inside the person one is reading about. Therefore it could be argued that reading literature could promote emotional literacy (D. Evans, 2003; J. Evans, 2009; Nikolajeva, 2013, 2018;

Rosenblatt, 1994, 1995; Sipe, 2008 in Tørnby, 2020, p. 132). As Nikolajeva (2013) points out: "To infer fictional characters' emotions from their behaviour and direct speech, and to understand their understanding of each other's' emotions, provides excellent training for real-life social engagement" (p. 107).

Martinsen (2019) also points out that literature can be valuable in terms of understanding and dealing with emotions. Using fictive characters or settings to talk about difficult subjects or situations can be useful for students who struggle to understand and express their own emotions. Additionally, it can offer an expanded vocabulary related to these feelings that students can learn to put into words how they feel – which is central in the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills, as it may enhance their self-image and identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b).

Empathy is closely connected to what Nussbaum (1997) calls *narrative imagination.* She argues that the ability to imagine that other people have their own internal world, with thoughts, emotions, goals and dreams, could especially be developed in encounters with literature. Literary texts offer an opportunity to recognize the humanity of others who think, feel and act different from oneself, and to develop an understanding towards why people act as they do, given their circumstances. Literature gives us an opportunity to *live* others' realities and experience their destinies. Also, it opens up for a feeling of compassion for others.

Compassion relies on empathic abilities and is according to Nussbaum (1997) essential as a citizen of the world. Through narrative imagination, one learns to base choices and actions on not only one's own interests, but also to support the needs of others. The recognition of "that might have been me, and that is how I should want to be treated" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 91) gives us a sense of connection to other human beings, and ultimately makes us more emphatic citizens. Nussbaum (1997) further argues that the development of narrative imagination is at its greatest potential when being confronted with those who are different from oneself. To put oneself in another's situation is a difficult task, but Nussbaum (1997) believes that literature offers a rich opportunity to tackle this in a meaningful way. A diversity of literary texts may contribute to develop one's narrative imagination, especially those that radically differ from one's own life. As students better understand and learn to empathize with diverse others through text, they realize that people share more similarities than differences, decreasing the potential for prejudice (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2019). By introducing students to

literature that focus on "outsider" roles in a variety of situations and contexts, they can learn to become more attentive to others and consider their actions beyond the literature and beyond the walls of the classroom (Edgar, 2020). As mentioned earlier, the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills is about teaching students to make good life choices for themselves, and as a member of a global society. Arguably, this legitimizes the use of literature to promote empathy in the English subject.

There are, however, some possible concerns that come with the desire, and the responsibility, of teaching empathy. Firstly, that it "somehow eradicates the experience of the other and replaces it with a narcissistic sameness" (Edgar, 2020, p. 72). In other words, the feeling of empathy moves over to a feeling of sympathy, which is solely seen from one's own position. Making the experience about oneself, could reduce the understanding of *the other* and it is therefore crucial to teach texts in conjunction with the cultural and historical context to avoid this issue. Secondly, teachers must be aware when choosing which texts to teach, and how to teach them, to avoid it having the opposite effect – less empathy and more resistance to difference and diversity (Junker & Jacquemin, 2017, p. 85). Lastly, the accessibility of the text can affect the students' emphatic response. If the student's level of proficiency and cultural understanding of the text is low, it may not contribute to the development of empathy. It is therefore important to ensure that the texts and approaches are accessible to the students, and that the students get an opportunity to practice and learn how to become more emphatic.

One way of adapting to the different levels in the classroom, is to use picturebooks. Tørnby (2020) argues that the use of picturebooks are good resources to enable students to develop empathy and cope with feelings. Although the words in picturebooks may convey emotions, they "frequently utilize images, including wordless double spreads, to convey strong emotions for which words would be insufficient and inadequate" (Nikolajeva, 2018, p. 114 in Tørnby, 2020, p. 132). Responding to the emotions in a picturebook may therefore especially be suitable for less proficient readers.

1.4.3 EXAMPLE: THE GIVING TREE & HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS

A good example of a picturebook when working with health and life skills is *The Giving Tree.* The story follows a young boy who spends every day with a tree he cares deeply about. As the boy grows older, he spends less and less time with the tree, but comes back on occasions when he needs something. The tree offers the boy its apples to sell, its branches to build a

house, and its trunk to build a boat. In the end, the boy comes back to the tree as an old man, but the tree only has its stump to offer, but which is all the man needs (Silverstein, 2004).

This book includes emotions such as love, togetherness, giving, receiving, greed, and different phases of life (Tørnby, 2020). As a teacher, one can ask questions that promote reflections linked to sustainability, the gift of giving, the gift of love and providing, a story of loss or a story about growing up – all related to Bildung and empathy.

One of the essential aspects of the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills, is the ability to both draw own boundaries and respect others' boundaries. In this context, *The Giving Tree* is an example of not respecting others' boundaries, as the boy takes and takes from the tree, without recognizing the consequences. The tree continues to give selflessly, and it could be discussed whether this is a desirable quality. The lack of boundaries, or not prioritizing one's boundaries can have a negative impact. Discussing these issues, the students can reflect on what values and attitudes are important towards oneself to live a good life – but with respect towards others.

In addition to talking about the thematic issues in this picturebook, it could be fruitful to discuss the emotions it triggered when reading it. For example, some students may have felt an anger over injustice, and there is a lot of learning potential in discussing how these emotions affect the reading of the literary text. Therefore, this book can be read in terms of the emotions of the characters portrayed in the story, as well as the emotions it triggers in the reader – hence it could develop students' emotional literacy. This aspect emphasizes the importance of reading the picturebook aesthetically, to provoke these emotions in the students. As Rosenblatt argues, it is when these experiences lead to reflection and understanding that the impact of literature can be powerful.

1.5 CONCLUSION

According to LK20, health and life skills include "value choices, the importance of meaning in life and relations with others, the ability to draw boundaries and to respect others' boundaries, and the ability to deal with thoughts, feelings and relationships" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). In the English subject, health and life skills seeks to "provide new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns, as well as on the pupils' own way of life and that of others" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). In this chapter, I

have argued that literature is a valuable way of working with this interdisciplinary topic in the English subject.

Working with literature in the classroom may contribute to material, formal and categorial Bildung. It is according to Klafki (1996) the combination between the objective content and the subjective reader that offers the greatest potential for Bildung, as these aspects are intertwined. It is not only about *what* the students read, but also *how* they work with it. Teachers should select literature that holds potential for Bildung in itself, but also make sure that students develop their fictive reading competence. As argued in the section for categorial Bildung, literary conversations open up for different interpretations and perspectives, and then challenges the students to rethink their own position and values. Using a literary text as a starting point for the conversation, and having the students refer back to it to support their opinions, the learning could be seen as *exemplary,* and they will develop skills that they need in their lives. The teacher is responsible for creating a community of interpretation where the students can express their viewpoints and learning to meet other perspectives with a critical distance. Arguably, literature may promote Bildung when students learn *from* and *through* a literary text.

Central to Bildung, is the development of empathy. The students must learn to imagine be in someone else's shoes in order to make sense of the world, others and themselves. Literature offers an opportunity to develop students' ability of mentalization and emotional literacy, as they are transported into the story. Additionally, working with literature may develop students' narrative imagination, which Nussbaum (1997) argues to be essential as a global citizen of the world. By being presented to literary texts that revolves around diverse others, students may become more emphatic and make good choices for themselves, while supporting the needs of others. Teachers should, however, be aware the possible concerns that comes with teaching empathy. In the attempt of feeling compassion and empathy for *the other*, it could be replaced with narcissistic sameness. Rather than trying to understand someone from the given context, it is only seen from one's own perspective. Using literature is therefore a great opportunity to give students room to *learn* and develop emphatic abilities. Especially, if they are confronted with literary texts that differs from themselves.

The life skills that students acquire through literature is closely connected to being a democratic citizen. The next chapter will focus on using literature to promote the second interdisciplinary topic: *democracy and citizenship.*

CHAPTER II: DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP & LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

From the previous chapter, we learned that the interdisciplinary topic *health and life skills* revolves around educating students to make responsible life choices, for oneself and for others (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). In the new curriculum, *democracy and citizenship* has been introduced as the second interdisciplinary topic. From a societal point of view, these life skills should help students to become active members of a democratic society.

Fostering the development of democratic individuals who are able to communicate across different cultures has its roots from humanistic Bildung ideas (Hoff, 2020). As mentioned in chapter II, Bildung is not only about personal growth, but also about considering cultural and social aspects when seeking understanding of oneself, others and the world (Hoff, 2014). There is a natural bridge from the concept of Bildung and empathy to democratic citizenship, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Globalization, migration and the technological revolution have increased the need for intercultural understanding and communication (Hoff, 2020). Education should prepare students to become global citizens, which entails developing knowledge, skills and attitudes according to democratic values and principles. It is about learning to put one's own bias aside, to seek cultural understanding of others – but also keeping a critical position while doing so.

The importance of the school's democratic mission has been emphasized in the new curriculum, as democracy and citizenship should be integrated into all subjects. The English subject is considered a powerful arena for intercultural explorations, as the process of learning a foreign language entails being socialized into foreign cultures (Fenner, 2012 in Hoff, 2020, p.69). Moving from the notion of trying to resemble a native speaker of English, the focus is now on becoming an *intercultural speaker* which could function as "a mediator between different worldviews in order to establish mutual respect and understanding" (Byram, 1997, in Hoff, 2020, p. 72).

There are countless ways of working with democracy and citizenship in the classroom. However, this chapter will focus on the benefits of using literature in the English subject to promote this interdisciplinary topic. Firstly, I will present how the new curriculum defines

democracy and citizenship. Secondly, I will present relevant theoretical framework related to democratic citizenship. Naturally, there are many aspects of relevance, however due to the scope of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on *intercultural competence* and *critical literacy* in my discussion. Further, I will present my findings and discuss the benefits of using literature to promote intercultural competence and critical literacy. Lastly, I will use the picturebook *The Giving Tree* as a practical example of working with literature to promote democracy and citizenship in the English subject.

2.2 DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN LK20

In the core curriculum of LK20, the interdisciplinary topic *democracy and citizenship* should ensure that students gain "knowledge about the basic tenets of democracy and its values and rules, and prepare them for participating in democratic processes" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). It includes an understanding of the relationship between democracy and human rights, and an insight into the fact that democracy comes in different forms and expressions.

By working with this interdisciplinary topic, the students should learn about the relationship between their individual rights and their obligations as citizens of a society. A democratic society depends on active citizens who know their rights, and who exercise these rights by participating in political processes. In this matter, the school is responsible for stimulating the students to become active citizens and give them the competence to influence and develop democracy in Norway (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

Students should learn to face challenges according to democratic principles, and understand the dilemmas that occur when recognizing "the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Moreover, the students must develop knowledge and skills such as critical thinking, the ability to deal with conflicts of opinion, and to respect disagreement. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary topic shall teach the students "why democracy cannot be taken for granted and understand that it must be developed and maintained" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

In the English subject, democracy and citizenship refers to helping the students understand that the world is culture-dependent. By learning English, the students will be able to communicate with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. Hence, they will also be able to experience different cultures and societies apart from their

own. As a result, it can open for "new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b)

2.3 THEORY

Based on what LK20 refers to as democracy and citizenship, I will in the following section present relevant theory which the discussion will draw upon. Firstly, I will present other theoretical aspects on democracy and citizenship, followed by theoretical framework related to intercultural competence and critical literacy.

2.3.1 DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

Democracy is a term to which it is hard to give one single definition because it can be understood and interpreted in different ways. The word "democracy" is of Greek descent and can be directly translated into "rule of the people" (Stray, 2011). According to Stray (2011), one's understanding of the term "democracy" is affected by the social, political, ideological, historical and cultural context in which it is being discussed. Further, she points to four dimensions of democracy: (1) democracy as a state form governed by the people, (2) democracy as rights and a state governed by laws, (3) democracy as active participation, and (4) democracy as a common values (Østerud, Selle, og Engelstad, 2003 in Stray, 2011, p. 26).

The two first dimensions are often referred to as the *representative democracy*. This entails that citizens use their right to vote for the political party that represents their interest in the best way. However, it depends on support through electoral participation, and that the rights of the citizens are being secured by laws (Stray, 2011). The third dimension, also referred to as *democracy of participation* or *deliberative democracy*, is dependent on citizens participating in democratic processes, and is characterized by dialogue and discussion (deliberation). Habermas (1997, 1999) claims that the principle of deliberation entails exploring controversial topics through *lordless dialogue* (in Stray, 2011). In other words, everyone should be given the opportunity to present their arguments on issues that concern themselves. By doing so, one can contribute to an agreeable solution. The last dimension, *democracy as common values,* includes the idea and ambition that citizens of a democratic society should develop a common democratic identity, so that conflicts and challenges may be solved within a democratic framework. Moreover, it can be interpreted within this dimension

that citizens have individual rights, but simultaneously a responsibility to participate in the political community (Stray, 2011).

An important part of a democratic community is what Iversen (2014) refers to as "uengihetsfellesskap" – hereby translated to *community of disagreement*. He defines it as a group of people who have different opinions and perspectives, but who together work to find a common solution to a problem or a challenge. Ideally, it is about being able to put oneself into others' worldviews through dialogue and discussion. This insight may then create more understanding and increase the solidarity within the community. Essentially, it is about creating unity despite differences (Iversen, 2014). This corresponds to Dewey's (2005) understanding of democracy: as a way of life in unity with others where an environment for democratic interaction is developed. In other words, it should be facilitated for development through interactions and shared interests (p. 44 in Sætra & Stray, 2019). A *community of disagreement* can be connected to the environment that is created and developed within a classroom, and it is therefore especially important in relation to democracy education.

After July 22nd, 2011, there has been an increased focus on democracy and how to strengthen the democratic values in Norway. At the same time, there is an increasing tendency of right-extremist attitudes, not only in Norway, but throughout Europe (Jacob Aasland, 2020). Such political and cultural development traits in society also affect the education system and its democratic socialization. The Norwegian education system aims to develop and maintain the democracy, which is reflected in the priorities and formulations of the curriculum. The education should ensure that students gain competences, knowledge, attitudes, values and experiences that prepare them to become democratic members of society (Stray, 2011).

It could therefore be argued that democracy education must include what Stray (2012) calls education *about, for* and *through* democratic participation. Education *about* democratic participation revolves around gaining knowledge about political institutions and processes, as well as the rights and commitments one has as a citizen in the given society. In other words, it is about the cognitive aspects of learning in a school context. Education *for* democratic participation has its purpose of developing skills and values, such as critical thinking and reflections around one's own actions and the community which one is part of. Moreover, it is strongly anchored in values and attitudes, which is closely connected to the objectives of education, stated in section 1-1 of the Education Act (The Education Act, 1998). Education *through* democratic participation means that the students are given opportunities to practice

and experience the democracy both in and outside of school. The purpose is to develop practical skills and competences that enables them to participate in democratic processes and act responsibly (Stray, 2012).

An important aspect of a democracy is to enter into other cultures and try to understand how they are similar or different to one's own. As a democratic citizen one has a responsibility to take part in the cultural diversity that exists within society. The term *cultural capital* could be used to describe whether or not one is familiar to other cultures than one's own. Bourdieu (1977) argues that cultural capital is a valuable resource that acts like a "gateaway to children's future academic, social and economic success" (in Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014, p. 281). Gaining a cultural capital could therefore be argued to be essential in relation to democratic citizenship, promoting equal opportunities for participation for all. Democracy education must then include encounters with different cultures that the students would meet in their lives outside of the classroom. Democracy and citizenship as a school subject is not only about preparing the students for participation in the society which they are members of (in a geographical sense). It is about preparing them to become global citizens of the world. This entails learning a way of living that recognizes the world's complex web of connections and interdependencies, and "in which our choices and actions may have repercussions for people and communities locally, nationally or internationally" (Edgar, 2020, p. 68).

2.3.2 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

The term *intercultural competence* is at the core of both LK 20 and Stray's understanding of democracy. To gain a deeper understanding of the term, it is useful to start by looking at the term *culture*.

Similar to the term democracy, "culture" cannot easily be tied down to one authoritative definition (Hoff, 2020). Moreover, it could be understood in many different ways depending on which context it is being discussed. Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1989) distinguish four dimensions of culture: "*the aesthetic sense* in which a language is associated to literature, film, and music of a particular country, *the sociological sense* in which the language is linked to the customs and institutions of a country, *the semantic sense* in which a culture's conceptual system is embodied in the language, and *the pragmatic sense* in which cultural norms influence what language is appropriate for what context" (in McKay, 2001, p. 328).

When discussing the different dimensions of culture, it is important to *not* assume that cultures are something that can be identified by geographical borders or ethnical groups, but rather as something dynamic and complex (Kramsch, 2015 in Rindal, Beiler, & Listuen, 2020, p. 218). These assumptions might lead to generalization and stereotypical perceptions of different groups of people, and may create "a heavier focus on what might seem exotic from an outside perspective" (Atkinson, 1999; Kramsch, 2006; Meadows 2016 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 218). In order to gain access to the nuances and complexities of culture, it is therefore essential to focus on attitudes and skills that can contribute to counteract generalization and develop an *intercultural competence*.

Intercultural competence can be defined as "the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and [the] ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 5 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 219). The word *inter*cultural indicates the ability to
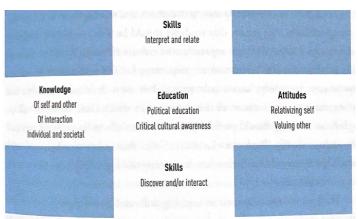

FIGURE 1 FACTORS IN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE (BASED ON BYRAM, 1997, P. 34 IN RINDAL ET AL., 2020, P. 219)

involve both one's own culture and other cultures when developing skills, attitudes and knowledge that are necessary in order to communicate well with people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 2014; Dypedahl & Eschenbach, 2014 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 219).

To illustrate what factors that are involved in such intercultural communication, it is appropriate to turn to Byram's model of *intercultural communicative competence*. In his model, he presents the qualities required of a competent intercultural speaker, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and education (in Rindal et al., 2020).

As Byram's model in Figure 1 shows, one needs *knowledge* to develop intercultural competence. This entails knowledge about specific cultures related to one*self* and *other*, as well as knowledge about *individual* and *societal* culture in general. In relation to English as a lingua franca, one needs knowledge of cultures for those who use English for *interaction*, not only the cultures of native speakers of English. Furthermore, one needs *skills* to develop intercultural competence, which is illustrated in two rubrics of Byram's model. Firstly, one

needs skills of *interpreting* different aspects of cultures and *relating* them to each other. In other words, one should be able to observe, compare, evaluate and analyse different cultural expressions (Deardoff, 2011 in Rindal et al., 2020). Secondly, one needs the skills of *discovery* and *interaction* in order to acquire new knowledge about cultures, and know what to *do* with this knowledge, both when developing it and when using it in communication. Perhaps the most important factor in intercultural competence, is *attitudes.* This includes *relativising self* – understanding that one's own culture is not neutral, and that it may be strange or unfamiliar to other people – and *valuing other* people who are different from oneself. Openness, curiosity and respect are key components in order to learn about and value other cultures and cultural diversity (Dypedahl & Eschenbach, 2014 in Rindal et al., 2020). The aspect of attitudes in Byram's model may be facilitated by developing *critical cultural awareness*, which is included in the *education* rubric in Figure 1 (Rindal et al., 2020, pp. 220-221). Critical cultural awareness could be defined as "the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in our own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 53 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 221). Being critical in this matter is not about being negative, but rather to take a questioning disposition in order to seek an understanding of the origins and effects of culture.

Byram's model has had a great impact on the way educators have approached the teaching of intercultural competence. However, it has also been criticised for being too simplified and that it does not reflect "the complexities of our contemporary world" in an adequate way (Dervin, 2010, 2016; Dervin & Gross, 2016; Hoff, 2014, 2016; Kramsch, 2011; Risager, 2007; Ros i Solé, 2013 in Hoff, 2020, p. 75). Due to the scope of this thesis, I will not go much into details on all these criticisms, but it is important to keep this critical perspective in mind. For example, one of the concerns is that *language* is left out of the model, and that language and culture must be seen as inseparable. On one hand, Kramsch (1998, p. 77) argues that language is a "sensitive indicator of the relationship between an individual and a given social group", and may be a valuable aspect of intercultural language learning (in Hoff, 2020, p. 76). On the other hand, processes of internationalisation and globalisation stresses a necessity for a more nuanced understanding of how culture functions as a dimension of language itself (Risager, 2003 in Hoff, 2020, p. 76). Kramsch (1993) further argues that "the ultimate goal of cultural learning is to help learners see their culture in relation to others so as to promote cross-cultural understanding" (in McKay, 2011, p. 329). Essentially, she states that language cannot be taught without culture. If language is considered a social practice used for communication

between people of different cultural backgrounds, then "culture becomes the very core of language teaching" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 8 in McKay, 2001, p. 329). From this point of view, learning English as a foreign or second language holds a crucial role in promoting this cross-cultural understanding – which is reflected in the new curriculum. Ultimately, it is important to regard culture as an aspect of communication. If not doing so, it may "hide discourses of discrimination, power and superiority" (Dervin, 2016, p. 80 in Hoff, 2020, p. 76).

Intercultural competence is therefore more than emphatic tolerance of otherness and the inclination to understand oneself and others – it is also about the ability to "navigate conflict, complexity and ambivalence in intercultural encounters in a constructive manner" (Dervin, 2016; Hoff, 2019; Kramsch, 2011 in Hoff, 2020, p. 79) – which is at the very core of the interdisciplinary topic *democracy and citizenship.* In order to navigate within these aspects, developing critical thinking skills is especially important. It could therefore be argued that aspects of intercultural competence may be connected to *critical literacy*, which is presented below.

2.3.3 CRITICAL LITERACY

Another aspect of the interdisciplinary topic democracy and citizenship is *critical literacy*. Before diving deeper into this term, it is useful to look at the term *literacy* and the term *critical thinking* to better understand the concept of critical literacy, and why this is a competence that is crucial to develop as a member of a democratic society.

In educational discourses, the term *literacy* is central. A commonly used definition of literacy is "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 21). Additionally, literacy involves "a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 21). This definition offers an indication of *what* one can achieve with competence in literacy, but it also recognizes literacy as a prerequisite for democratic citizenship. If citizens are to fully participate in the deliberative democracy, they need the necessary competences that ensures access to this society and to express one's opinions and perspectives (Blikstad-Balas, 2016). Literacy could then be understood both from an individual, cognitive perspective as a prerequisite for learning and development, and from a societal perspective as a prerequisite for democratic participation.

As a strongly text-based society, it is crucial to develop literacy in the meeting with and navigation within these texts. Scholes (1988) argues that in order to understand and produce a variety of texts, one must include a meta-perspective with curiosity and critique. To reveal and understand what he calls "textual power", one needs to read texts with sympathy within the text, but at the same time take a step back to observe it critically from the outside (in Skarstein, 2013, pp. 69-70). Having this meta-perspective could prevent subconscious influence from the text when seeking to create meaning from it. This can be interpreted as the ability to think critically, or as Dewey (1991) has defined as *reflective thinking*: "[a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6 in Flatmoen, 2020, p. 18). In other words, critical thinking is about taking an active, assessing position towards the information and knowledge we acquire.

Critical thinking is presented in LK20 as one of the core values of the education. It is stated that students must be able to "assess different sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). The students must develop an understanding that their own viewpoints do not necessarily align with others', and that established knowledge should be respected, as well as critically explored. Along with critical thinking, ethical awareness – balancing different considerations – is considered a requirement for learning in different contexts and developing good judgement (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). The definition of critical thinking that is presented in LK20 highlights the importance of an exploring attitude that ensures that thoughts and actions are based on meaningful reflection around different texts, information and utterances. Therefore, it could be argued that critical thinking in this sense can be interpreted from a critical literacy perspective.

According to Skaftun (2009), critical literacy is about being aware of the different social power structures that are present in different texts (in Blikstad-Balas, 2016). Language and text are products of social construction, with intentions of reflecting certain attitudes and values that one must be aware of. In this matter, critical literacy is about understanding that every text one reads also includes ideological perspectives of the world (Freire, 2006 in Flatmoen, 2020).

Janks (2010) argues that texts have designs on us. In this sense, every text is affected by its way of seeing and understanding the world with an aim to affect the reader. Janks (2010) stresses the importance of keeping a critical distance in the meeting with texts, as every text is

a representation of reality, and language and visuals are part of constructing this reality. Essentially, all texts are "positioned and positioning"; positioned by the writer's point of view and the linguistic choices are meant to produce effects that position the reader (Janks, 2010, p. 61). This is not necessary negative, because there would be no point in using language overall if we did not want people to be persuaded by our views. Nevertheless, it is the effects of the positioning that should be taken into judgment – whether it is good or bad based on fairness, equity and compassion. As consumers of textual meanings, we must have the ability to see "the truths that texts constitute and that constitute them and we have to be able to imagine their effects" (Janks, 2010, p. 98).

In order to understand how texts work on us, we need strategies for resistant reading, or as Janks (2010) refers to as *critical reading*. Critical reading involves reading *against* the text, where one asks analytical questions and reveal how the text works on us. For example, by analyzing the linguistic, grammatical and sequencing of a text, as well as its visuals, one can see that no text is neutral, and that all description implies interpretation. If we read texts that offend us, it is easier to read against it. But if we are comfortable when reading a text, it is more difficult to read against it. Keeping a critical distance in the meeting with different text is especially important due to the development of technology that allows images or texts to lie, and the line between what is true and not has become blurred. It could therefore be argued that critical reading is an essential competence in the 21st century.

Although critical distance is important for critical reading, Janks (2010) points out the importance of reading *with* the text as well. This entails a more sympathetic reading when trying to make sense of the worldview that it portrayed in it. Critical literacy, according to Janks (2010), is therefore about being able to take both an engaged and estranged position when reading a text. Engaged in a sense that one seeks to interpret and understand the content of the text and estranged in a sense that one can use analytical tools to distance ourselves from the structural codes of it. Janks (2010) further argues that it does not matter what is being done first – as long as in the end one is able to do both. As she puts it: "Engagement without estrangement is a form of submission to the power of the text regardless of the reader's own positions" and "estrangement without engagement is a refusal to leave the confines of one's own subjectivity, a refusal to allow otherness to enter" (Janks, 2010, p. 96).

From an educational point of view, Vasquez (1994) defines critical literacy as "a way of being" and argues that it should be a way of framing participation in the world both in and

outside of school (in Vasquez, 2014, pp. 1-3). According to Vasquez (2014) a critical literacy curriculum cannot be traditionally taught – it needs to be lived. In other words, it should not be just an add-on into the teaching practice but incorporated into the students' everyday lives. The teacher must then negotiate and create spaces for critical literacies in the classroom. It is not about finding critical literacy texts, because there is no such thing, but rather acknowledge that all texts can be read from a critical perspective. By making it visible that the world is a socially constructed text, that can be object for interpretation and critique, students learn that "when we read the word, we simultaneously read the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987 in Vasquez, 2014, p. 7). In this way, they learn that all texts can be deconstructed and reconstructed and that critical literacy practices can contribute to change (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Vasquez, 2004 in Vasquez, 2014, p. 8). The students need to learn how to navigate in a world full of textual meanings with a critical lens in order to assess the information they base their understandings and opinions upon. Curiosity and critique are important aspects in developing a democratic society. Arguably, working with critical literacy is an important aspect of democracy education.

2.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

So far, I have presented relevant theoretical framework which the following section will build upon. As this thesis argues, literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum. The following section in this chapter will include the findings and discussion on why literature is a valuable way of working with democracy and citizenship, with a main focus on intercultural competence and critical literacy.

2.4.1 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

As this chapter shows, the English subject holds a central role in the mission of developing democratic citizens. The intercultural dimension of the English subject should be understood as "a matter of looking beyond words and actions and embracing multiple, changing and conflicting discourse worlds" (Kramsch, 2011, p. 356 in Hoff, 2020, p. 79). By learning English, the door to the English-speaking world opens where students can experience different cultures apart from their own. In order to prepare students to become open for "new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice", the development of intercultural competence is crucial (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Using literary texts in the classroom offers a potential to give students access to

different cultures and is therefore a valuable way of promoting democracy and citizenship in the English subject.

Encounters with literary texts may increase students' cultural capital, and help develop their intercultural competence, as it exposes them to such cultural diversity. In this manner, teaching aspects of culture through literature supports the principle of inclusive education, as every student is given the opportunity to increase their cultural capital. There might be a gap in students' cultural capital, depending on their backgrounds and to what degree they have been given access to cultural diversity in at home. Low cultural capital may lead to more distance towards people who different from oneself, because you cannot gain access to different cultures if you do not understand them. Working with literature in the classroom also reveals the cultural diversity within a student group, as it brings to light the different interpretations and responses to literature. Hence, both the literary content and approaches to literature that emphasizes and fosters a community of interpretation – as well as a community of disagreement – are important aspects of promoting democracy and citizenship in the English subject.

One way of developing students' intercultural competence is using multicultural literature in the English subject, as it helps students identify their own culture, exposes them to other cultures and opens up a dialogue on issues about diversity (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Since culture as a term is considered a complex, dynamic concept, multicultural literature in this sense could be regarded as *all* literary texts that can be discussed from a cultural perspective. Including literature that portrays a variety of cultures, people and disabilities could be considered a natural extension of a multicultural education that is emphasized in today's society. According to Neito (2000), "multicultural education is for everyone regardless of ethnicity, race, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences" (p. 4 in Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 26). Ultimately, multicultural literature is a powerful tool contributing to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion.

Byram et al. (2002) suggests using authentic material when teaching aspects of culture, and that they should be presented in with their original context in order to be meaningful. Using authentic literary texts entails that students should be given access to when and where it was published and who the intended audience was. As this section of the chapter argues, using multicultural literature is a valuable way of promoting democracy and citizenship – from the perspective of intercultural competence. The discussion will draw upon Byram's (1997)

model presented in section 3.3.2. The teaching practice should revolve around developing students' *knowledge, skills,* and *attitudes*. Similar to Stray (2012) and her view on democracy education, one could say that students should learn *about, through* and *for* cultural encounters.

KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING ABOUT CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

Multicultural literature offers opportunities to explore and gain knowledge about different cultures. Presenting culturally diverse literature in the classroom brings culturally diverse knowledge to all students. And because knowledge is power, it will empower the students with cultural diversity and tolerance (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Although gaining general knowledge about cultures and customs of different parts of the world is an important part of learning that the world is culture-dependent (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b), it is equally important to acknowledge the complexity of culture. Multicultural literature may then also be understood as involving perspectives on identity, sexuality, religion, immigration, race, and other aspects of *ideo-cultures*. Attridge (2017) states that all individuals have their own ideo-culture which is a "complex matrix" of habits, ways of thinking, values, beliefs, and prejudices that "operate intellectually, emotionally, and physically to produce a sense of at least relative continuity, coherence, and significance out of the manifold events of human living" (p. 29). As students bring their own cultural identities, or ideo-cultures, into the classroom, teachers are expected to teach in a way that uses this cultural diversity to develop their intercultural competence (Rindal et al., 2020). Attridge (2017) connects ideo-culture to the subjectivity of reading a literary text. In relation to teaching multicultural literature, it must be acknowledged that the students' ideo-cultures affect their meeting with the text, and they will have different understandings based on their cultural systems.

Literature could be a powerful tool to perpetuate and dissolve stereotypes. Classrooms represent students from various cultural backgrounds, hence the cultural references in a literary text may be known and accepted to some, yet unfamiliar to others (McKay, 2001). The ideal is that the discussions that occur when working with this kind of literature, will create an understanding of why characters of different cultural backgrounds acted the way they did. Approaching these topics through literature, could avoid cultural stereotyping, since the discussions will be grounded in a literary context (McKay, 2001).

Multicultural literature is a way of promoting representation of the cultural diversity that exists within the classroom - and in the world for that matter. If the students feel like they can relate to the literature, it creates an engagement with the text and opens for the ability to learn

about others as well. Students need to see the connections between literature and their everyday lives and receive affirmation of themselves and their culture through it as well. Moreover, they need to be able to "connect text to self in order to promote greater meaning" (Bieger, 1995, 1996; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1978 in Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 24). Students are often asked to make connections to their personal lives, but if they do not find themselves or their lives reflected in the literature, it is more difficult to find these connections. The selection of quality literature that ensures that students can identify with characters or situations while they read, is crucial to both celebrating who they are while learning about others (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Additionally, and perhaps most important, the students would be able to experience the significance of their contribution when working with literature and that it is beneficial for all students (Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 27).

The teacher's role when working with literature is significant. Selecting literature that reflects a diverse society may motivate students to read, but also create an understanding of the principles of tolerance, inclusiveness, diversity and respect for all. If the classroom is to become a place where equity is valued, an exploration of racial stereotypes, beliefs and perspectives is necessary (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; O'Neill, 1998 in Colby & Lyon, 2004). As it is important to consider the cultural perspectives of the students, teachers must also examine their own cultural perspectives when selecting materials to teach. The decisions that the teacher makes is never neutral, and what is excluded is often as telling as what is included. Cochran-Smith (2000) argues that all teachers have a responsibility to struggle along with others to "unlearn" racism. Well-meaning teachers might be in the risk of unintentional discrimination, if they do not expose their students to multicultural literature. Therefore, reflecting on and changing standard practice include both learning and "unlearning" simultaneously (Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 27). The material that students are provided with in school, will have an impact on their lives and experiences. Developing an awareness of one's own beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to cultural diversity is therefore "an important step towards reaching the goal of assisting children as they develop into productive citizens in a pluralistic society" (Neito, 2000 in Colby & Lyon, 2004, pp. 27-28).

SKILLS: LEARNING THROUGH CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

It is perhaps an ideal, unrealistic thought that students will gain knowledge of *all* cultures throughout their education. Although working with multicultural literature may contribute to

enhance students' cultural capital, they are never fully educated on the issue. This emphasizes the importance of developing the necessary skills to acquire new knowledge in the meeting with diverse cultural encounters after they have finished school.

The skills that are included in Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, show that students should both learn to interpret and relate, and discover and interact. As presented above, multicultural literature may offer a diversity of cultural encounters in relation to its content. When talking about learning *through* cultural encounters when working with literature, it can be understood as encounters with the cultures portrayed in the text – as well as the cultural encounters between the students themselves. In other words, both the aesthetic experience of reading and the discussion of those experiences and interpretations in the classroom could be argued as valuable ways of promoting intercultural competence.

Volkman (2016) describes literary texts as "fictional laboratories" where learners are allowed to experiment with unfamiliarity through fictional characters' lives and compare them to their own. Furthermore, literature promotes intercultural learning because it "always present the other in fictionalized form and provoke culture-bound responses" (Volkman, 2015, p. 54 in Nemouchi & Byram, 2019, p. 183). Multicultural literature could be argued to provide a sort of "surrogate experience of encounters with foreignness which is not easily accessible first hand" (Volkman, 2015, p. 55 in Nemouchi & Byram, 2019, p. 183). Working with such literary texts in the classroom gives the students a chance to interpret what they read based on their individual responses, relate it to their own lives or experiences they have had, discover new meanings and interpretations in the interaction with the text and with each other. In other words, it offers a significant opportunity to practice and develop the skills they will need as democratic citizens in the meeting with cultural others.

By reading a fictional text in a foreign language, by forming hypotheses about it, by searching for alternative endings, by re-writing scenes or adding scenes – the text is being internalized. A kind of *in-between* world, or inter-culture, is being created when fragments of values and opinions of one's culture seeps into the discussions around the text. Furthermore, it could open up for an anxiety-free zone where foreign cultures can be freely discussed and explored. Encounters with foreign fictional texts may also be valuable for less experienced learners or reluctant readers, as they can eagerly participate with their opinions and experiences that they can base on their own multicultural background (Burwitz-Melzer, 2001). It could be argued

that the experimentation that Volkman (2016) talks about can lead to a deeper learning, because the text becomes part of the students. Moreover, they can bring this learning with them when they encounter new, but similar situations later.

It is evident that every student's aesthetic experience must be acknowledged and valued in order to promote a community of interpretation in the classroom. It is when these interpretations come to light, that the students realize that their peers' interpretations may differ from their own. The students must learn that their interactions with the text is a unique contribution to the community, as well as learning skills of interaction with others that promotes a safe environment to disagree. This is essential in order to discover new meanings or challenge one's initial responses. Developing these skills through literature where students can use their imagination and "hide" behind characters and situations, offers valuable learning that they can bring with them in their lives. Ultimately, it takes practice and guidance to develop skills of intercultural competence, and as this section argues, working with multicultural literature in the classroom is a fruitful way of doing so.

ATTITUDES: LEARNING FOR CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

It could be argued that the foundation for developing intercultural competence is in the students' *attitudes* (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Deardoff, 2011 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 220). In Byram's (1997) model, the rubric of attitudes includes the ability to relativizing oneself and valuing others. Openness, curiosity and respect towards cultural diversity is a necessity when it comes to motivation for learning about and for valuing others who are different from oneself, and thereby central attitudes for a democratic society (Dypedahl & Eschenbach, 2014 in Rindal et al., 2020, p. 220). Multicultural literature offers insight into otherness and challenges readers to put themselves in someone else's shoes to seek an understanding. Working together with multicultural literary texts where students are given room to express their opinions and thoughts, they also experience that there are no "right" or "wrong" interpretations. Rather they see that their own interpretations are not neutral but affected by their cultural background and reference points. This can lead to a greater openness towards those who are different from oneself and thereby promote inclusion. It could therefore be argued that multicultural literature is a valuable way of learning *for* cultural encounters.

According to Rindal et al. (2020), these attitudes can be promoted by developing *critical cultural awareness*. As presented in the theory section of this chapter, critical cultural

awareness is the ability to take a questioning and curious position towards aspects of culture and the effect it has on the understanding of perspectives, practices and products (Rindal et al., 2020). Working with multicultural literature can in this case be seen from all three perspectives: the diversity of perspectives that unfolds in the different interpretations of the text, how cultural aspects affect teaching and learning practice when working with the text, and that the text itself portrays aspects of culture that must be examined.

If multicultural literature is to be used to develop critical cultural awareness, both teachers and students must have the courage to examine own beliefs and assumptions. One example, and perhaps a continuing issue in today's society, is the "unexamined nature of perpetuating, albeit unconsciously, white culture in the classroom" (Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 25). Many scholars argue that there is a lack of awareness among white students, and teachers, regarding their own "whiteness" and the privileges this has granted them (Banks, 2001b; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Lawrence, 1997; Sleeter, 2001; Wiggans & Follo, 1999 in Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 25). This is highlighted in the article "Heightening Awareness about the Importance of Using Multicultural Literature", written by Colby and Lyon (2004). The study examines student teachers' responses to a text written by Heffflin & Barksdale-Ladd (2001) about the absence of African American characters and cultures found in many primary classrooms and the impact it has on children of color. The responses showed a diversity of understandings and reflections that the prospective teachers would bring into the classroom, which stresses the importance of developing a critical cultural awareness in encounters with literature. Taking a questioning position towards texts that only portray white people, the student teachers realized the effects of what this means to people of underrepresented cultures. Like other scholars in the field, Colby and Lyon (2004) emphasize the need for affirmation of oneself and one's culture through literature, as well as being able to connect the text to self in order to promote greater meaning (Bieger, 1995, 1996; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1978 in Colby & Lyon, 2004, p. 25) As the student teachers reflected upon the importance of finding oneself in the literature, and the consequences that come with not having that, it led to a feeling of empathy towards the people not represented. Many of the white student teachers admitted that they had not realized the issues, because they had characters and cultures to relate to. However, it is apparent that discussing such dilemmas opened the student teachers' eyes towards the issue. As one student said: "I cannot fully understand what it must be like to have a dominant culture being portrayed everywhere I looked, however, I can only imagine the stifling effect it would impose on someone" (Colby

& Lyon, 2004, p. 25). As Bishop (2007) has argued "students who do not see their culture reflected in the literature they read may believe that they have little or no importance in society and in school" (in Evans, 2010, p. 100).

It is apparent that working with multicultural literature that promotes representation of cultural diversity could then function as an opportunity for analyzing implicit or unexamed biases. Moreover, it could serve as an eye opener towards the importance of having access to appropriate literature and a classroom environment that acknowledges and celebrates cultural diversity. The task of promoting intercultural competence may seem daunting. However, it is important to keep in mind that undertaking this task offers "opportunities for authentic, meaningful and potentially transformative learning processes to take place in the English classroom" (Hoff, 2020, p. 87). As this section has argued, multicultural literature is a valuable tool to facilitate for these learning processes. In the next section of this chapter, I will argue how literature can be used to promote critical literacy.

2.4.2 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE CRITICAL LITERACY

As the section above has argued, critical cultural awareness is important in intercultural communication. It has also been argued that intercultural competence is about emphatic tolerance of otherness and the inclination to understand oneself and others, as well as the ability to navigate conflict, complexity and ambivalence in intercultural encounters in a constructive manner (Dervin, 2016; Hoff, 2019; Kramsch, 2011 in Hoff, 2020, p. 79). Intercultural competence is a necessity in order to navigate in today's society. In a society that is full of textual meanings, navigating within these texts, requires the ability to critically assess "the truths that texts constitute and that constitute them and we have to be able to imagine their effects" (Janks, 2010, p. 98). In other words, critical literacy is an important competence for students to develop to see beyond their own lives and the walls of the classroom. Hence, promoting critical literacy in the English subject is an important part of preparing students for democratic citizenship.

According to Clarke and Whitney (2009) critical literacy exploration should build upon deconstruction and reconstruction to connect to larger social issues. They argue that texts that portray multiple perspectives could be used in the classroom for students to consider "how power and positioning impacts how different perspectives are listened to and represented, not just in these texts but in their lives as well" (p. 534). Working with multicultural literature

could be argued to be a valuable way for such critical exploration, as it offers a variety of perspectives through characters and situations within the narrative. A contemporary example of such a work would be Elizabeth Acevedo's verse novel *Clap When You Land* (2019). The novel is told from the perspective of two first-person narrators who come from two different cultures. Camino lives in the Dominican Republic while her sister Yahaira comes from the United States. Additionally, a literary text in itself can bring out multiple perspectives in the diversity of interpretations of it within the student group.

The existence of the multicultural literature in the classroom is not enough. If the students are expected to become socially responsible, the teacher must help students to explore views and topics that support, as well as challenge their thinking (Evans, 2010). They need the tools to be able to analyze literature critically, asking themselves questions on what they believe about diversity, and read literature closely to discern the meanings given to difference in society (Flint, 2000 in Evans, 2010, p. 101). Combining the reading of multicultural literature with active discussions requires that students "observe and appreciate other cultures, discover their own ethnic identity, question issues of diversity, and move toward more empathy and tolerance of others" (Evans, 2010, p. 101). When students respond to the literature, they can use the narrative and the characters to learn about and connect it to their own lives, and experience emotions which will affect their understanding, confrontation and actions towards prejudice, intolerance, racism, inequality or untruths they may encounter. Using multicultural literature in the development of these skills leads to empowerment of the students, as they can transfer these skills to take a more critical stance in the society they are part (Evans, 2010).

As Janks (2010) argues, critical literacy entails the ability to both read with and against the text. Fictive reading competence is as we remember the ability to set aside the author's motives in order to seek understanding of the content (Steffensen, 2000). If students learn to read fictively, they are equipped for reading *with* texts, on the premises of the text itself and the genre it is understood as. As the students learn to recognize traits of fiction in a text, they can allow themselves to live the realities within the text – knowing it is fiction. Moreover, it puts one's preferred culture placed in the second row and allows for emphatic engagement and understanding of those portrayed in the text. In texts where students find themselves and identify with characters or situations, it can be considered easier to read with the text, because it is comfortable. Using multicultural literature where students are put in an unfamiliar, perhaps uncomfortable setting, is a valuable opportunity for intercultural learning and empathic tolerance of others. "Living" someone else's reality through literary texts could be

argued to be the closest thing to real-life cultural encounters. Using literature to develop fictive reading competence may then be a powerful arena to practice meetings with others who are different from oneself. As a consequence, it contributes to foster students who acknowledge and appreciate diversity and a community of disagreement (Iversen, 2014).

Although literary engagement is necessary for critical literacy practice in the classroom, it is also important to take an estranged position and read *against* the text. Resistant reading of literary texts can be executed by asking questions to reveal the "textual power" that are present. The author's use of language can be analyzed, or in a picturebook one can look at the images and what these tell us. Are there underlying cultural or historical contexts? Do the images affect our understanding of the narrative? Literary works that at first sight can be seen as pure entertainment, can be read from a critical perspective. Vasquez (2014) suggests a list of questions that could make critical perspectives visible to the students: (1) what is this text trying to do to me? (2) whose interests are marginalized or privileged by this text? (3) whose account of a particular topic or issue is missing? Said differently, whose voices are silenced? (4) whose voices are dominant? (5) whose reality is presented? (6) whose realities are ignored? (7) what are the positions from which I am reading this text? (8) what experiences am I drawing from to make meaning from this text? (p. 4) All these questions could be answered and explored through literature, and can work as a way of deconstructing the narrative, before working towards a reconstruction it and connect it to larger issues.

As other textual meanings, literature is positioned and positioning, and keeping a critical distance is as important. In other words, one must read against texts that are comfortable and familiar, because if not we leave out the understanding that one's own viewpoint is relative. One must read with texts that offend us; if not, there is a missed opportunity to expand one's horizon and challenge one's own thinking. Literature offers a way of moving from an engaged position in an aesthetic reading of literature where the students try to seek understanding of the text, and each student's response is considered a valuable asset to the community within the classroom. Furthermore, a literary discussion offers a way of taking an estranged position to question and challenge these understandings, as well as the power structures that lies within the text. Ultimately, this is how students can be educated to become emphatic, critical individual who are able to make judgements based on democratic principles. Hence, using literature can be a valuable tool in promoting critical literacy.

2.4.3 EXAMPLE: THE GIVING TREE & DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

A good example of a picturebook when working with democracy and citizenship is *The Giving Tree.* The story follows a young boy who spends every day with a tree he cares deeply about. As the boy grows older, he spends less and less time with the tree, but comes back on occasions when he needs something. The tree offers the boy its apples to sell, its branches to build a house, and its trunk to build a boat. In the end, the boy comes back to the tree as an old man, but the tree only has its stump to offer, but that is all the man needs (Silverstein, 2004).

In terms of promoting intercultural competence, this picturebook can be used to recognize the diversity of the interpretations that the students bring into a literary conversation. The students should first be guided through an aesthetic reading of the text, before being encouraged to share their interpretations, experiences, emotions, and responses to it. The intercultural aspect comes to light when the students are "forced" to listen to and acknowledge their peers' viewpoints and see that every reading is unique. As a teacher, it is important to make sure students know that their contributions in the conversation is of value – and that diversity is seen as a resource and opportunity to learn about each other. Being exposed to other responses to the book, students might also go back to their own interpretations and understandings and adjust these. Working with *The Giving Tree* offers a valuable opportunity to teach about, through and for cultural encounters.

The Giving Tree can also be read from a critical perspective. For example, it could be discussed how the author has made a choice to gender the tree in the story. The tree is referred to as "she", which could open up for an interesting and important discussion from a feminist perspective. As the tree keeps giving and giving, students can discuss how this affects the portrayal of women and the consequences of such literary choices. This underlying issue is a political as well as a democratic issue, and the students' interpretations may also differ. This brings up an authentic learning situation that hopefully will challenge the students' way of thinking. It is evident that *The Giving Tree* could also be read as an environmental story, which the next chapter of this thesis will focus on.

According to LK20, the school is responsible for stimulating the students to become active citizens and give them the competence to influence and develop democracy in Norway. They should be able to face challenges according to democratic principles, develop critical thinking skills and be able to respect disagreement (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). In the English subject, democracy and citizenship is about understanding that the world is culture-dependent, and in doing so students will experience cultural diversity that opens up for "new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudices" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). In this chapter, I have argued that literature is a valuable way of working with this interdisciplinary topic in the English subject.

Working with literature in the classroom may contribute to develop students' intercultural competence. Based on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, multicultural literature can be used to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students need as citizens of a diverse global society. Presenting students with literary texts that portray a diversity of cultures can contribute to increase students' cultural capital and develop new knowledge about themselves and others. It is important that students find themselves in the literature in order to feel valued, but it is also important to be exposed to other cultures than one's own. Students also need to develop skills in order to acquire new knowledge when they are finished in school. Discussions around fictional texts and the different responses within the student group is a valuable way of developing these skills, where students can use characters or situations from the text and relate it to their own lives and ways of thinking. Here students can "practice" their encounters with cultural others in a safe environment, and gain awareness for when they meet people who are different from themselves outside of school. Lastly, students must develop attitudes for intercultural competence, which can be promoted by developing critical cultural awareness. Openness and respect towards diversity is the starting point for intercultural encounters, and democracy in itself. If intercultural competence is not emphasized in the teaching, then it could be argued to be undemocratic as it hinders access to cultural capitals. Moreover, giving the students the necessary tools to take part in cultural exchanges is a necessity in a global world.

Another necessity in today's society is critical literacy. Literature offers a valuable way of reading both with and against a text, to seek understanding of it and reveal the power structures within. Developing fictive reading competence is important to properly read *with*

the text, because one's own subjective viewpoints are to be put aside in order to seek understanding of the text within the text's premises. It could be argued that using literature that engages, reflects and celebrates the cultural diversity within the classroom, is a valuable way of promoting critical literacy from the aspect of reading with texts. Furthermore, as consumers of textual meanings, it is important to seek an understanding of how texts work on us in order to reveal work against injustice. This can be done by reading *against* the text. Deconstructing and reconstructing literary texts by asking critical questions and relating it to larger social issues, is essential in a way of thinking that fosters democratic values. This ability is especially important in today's society where the lines between fiction and facts have become more blurred through fake news, blogs, reality shows, etc. Learning how to become critical individuals through working with literature that offers them concrete examples or reference points is therefore a valuable way of working with critical literacy in the English subject.

As the students learn about, through and for democratic participation, they are expected to participate and engage with issues that concern themselves, with empathy for others – including the environment. The next chapter will focus on using literature to promote the third interdisciplinary topic: *sustainable development.*

CHAPTER III: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As the two previous chapters have discussed, education should prepare students to become critical and empathic individuals, who make good life choices – for themselves and for others. This mission is reflected and defined through the interdisciplinary topics *health and life skills* and *democracy and citizenship*. Being a citizen today also includes the ability to face and deal with challenges, and the environmental crisis is one of the biggest issues that the world faces. In the core curriculum of LK20, *sustainable development* has been introduced as the third and last interdisciplinary topic. In other words, education practices should include perspectives that promotes sustainability and that fosters future global citizens to act ethically with environmental awareness.

Working with sustainable development in the classroom is not only about presenting students with knowledge. It is about giving them the right tools so that they can put their knowledge into practice. A prerequisite for creating a sustainable society is to acknowledge that everyone can change. According to Gil (2020) there are three levels of how change can happen in society and for the individuals: (1) on a personal level by developing values and attitudes that changes one's habits, (2) on a political level, where there needs to be a change in the political context through politics, and (3) on a practical level, where there need to be accessible solutions that facilitate for the opportunity of changing one's way of living. It could be argued that education is a powerful arena for promoting change on the first level; developing students' knowledge, skills and attitudes that promotes sustainable development.

The emphasis on sustainable development in the Norwegian school entails that students should gain knowledge on the issues related to sustainability and skills that ensures they can acquire new knowledge on their own. By exploring and experiencing the issues through different learning activities, especially those that connects to the students' own lives, they not only learn *what* sustainability is about, but also *how* they can contribute to a more sustainable society. In order to make an impact, the students must be taught in a way that awakens engagement, hope and a belief that they can make an impact. The school is not to educate activists, but rather foster individuals who are empowered to act based on their own reasoning and judgement. In this sense, sustainable development is dependent on solidarity, democratic

citizenship and "all-round" educated students (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Solidarity in this sense is not only important from a societal point of view, but as a fundamental for individuals' dignity (Freire, 1967 in Klein, 2020). It is clear, that the three interdisciplinary topics are not randomly selected for the new curriculum, as they naturally build upon each other. Like a symbiosis, they are all interconnected, and working with one frequently results in working with all simultaneously.

There are countless ways of working with sustainable development in the classroom. However, this chapter will focus on the benefits of using literature in the English subject to promote this interdisciplinary topic. Firstly, I will present how the new curriculum defines sustainable development. Naturally, there are many relevant aspects of relevance, however due to the scope of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on *environmental awareness* and *ecocriticism* in my discussion. Further, I will present my findings and discuss the benefits of using literature to promote environmental awareness and ecocriticism. Lastly, I will use the picturebook *The Giving Tree* as a practical example of working with literature to promote sustainable development in the English subject.

3.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LK20

In the core curriculum of LK20, the interdisciplinary topic *sustainable development* should help the students to understand basic dilemmas and developments in society, and how they can be dealt with. Sustainable development refers to "protecting life on earth and providing for the needs of people who live here now without destroying the possibilities for future generations to fill their needs" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Students should develop an understanding of the interconnection between social, economic, and environmental conditions, and acknowledge that one's lifestyle and consumption of resources have local, regional and global consequences.

Working with sustainable development, education should help students develop competence which enables them to make responsible choices and act ethically and with environmental awareness. Moreover, students must understand the significance of the choices and activities of all individuals. They should learn about the different aspects of sustainable development, including issues related to the environment and climate, poverty and distribution of resources, conflicts, health, equality, demographics and education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

According to LK20, sustainable development is also the impact technology has on human beings, the environment and society. Education should therefore ensure students develop technological competence and knowledge about the connections between technology and the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Students should also develop an understanding of the dilemmas that may arise from the use of technology and how these can be dealt with. This includes an understanding that even though technological development may solve many problems, it could also create new ones (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a).

In the English subject, sustainable development is not included as one of the interdisciplinary topics defined in the subject curriculum. As this thesis argues, the three interdisciplinary topics are closely connected, and it could be problematic to isolate them from each other. *Health and life skills* in the English subject is about preparing students to make good life choices, by developing linguistic competences to handle situations in different contexts and promoting empathy towards others. *Democracy and citizenship* in the English subject revolves around understanding that the world is culture-dependent, which opens up for new perspectives and engagement, as well as critical thinking citizens. As the core curriculum defines sustainable development, it is difficult to see why it has not been included in the English subject. Although the world is currently heavily affected by a global pandemic, the climate crisis still remains as the "biggest long-term threat to global stability" (Aldrick, 2021). As there is "no vaccine for this" (Aldrick, 2021), education holds a crucial role in developing global citizens of the world who are equipped to make responsible choices and deal with this issue. English is considered a lingua franca – a language of the world – and the threat to the environment and climate change is considered one of the largest global issues today. The fact that sustainable development is not included in the English subject curriculum is subject to criticism.

However, education should be based upon the whole curriculum, including the core curriculum. It could therefore be argued that although sustainable development is not explicitly stated in the English subject curriculum, teachers of English are still responsible to implement aspects of this interdisciplinary topic in their teaching practice. This thesis will go more in-depth as to how working with literature can contribute to students' understanding of sustainable development.

3.3 THEORY

Based on what LK20 refers to as sustainable development, I will in this section present relevant theory in which the discussion will draw upon. Firstly, I will present theoretical aspects related to sustainable development, followed by theoretical framework connected to environmental awareness and ecocriticism.

3.3.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The term *sustainable development* was first introduced by the Brundtland-commission in 1987 in their report called "Our Common Future". Sustainable development can be defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 41). The definition emphasizes the needs of those in poverty to fulfil their basic rights and the opportunity for a better life. Additionally, it is about the boundaries of nature's resources, using only what is necessary without compromising what is needed in the future. In other words, the purpose of the report was to address and seek to solve the world's poverty and environmental issues.

Sustainable development is about developing the world into a better place for all human beings, both now and in the future. According to United Nations (2019) it is about considering three aspects at the same time: the environmental, economic and social aspects. First, the environmental aspect is about taking care of the planet. The climate system is one of natural eco-systems that needs to be in balance, because it makes sure the temperature is maintained and the atmosphere lets out just enough solar energy. When emissions, such as CO_2 are released into the atmosphere, the temperature on the planet changes. It is therefore important to use renewable energy sources, such as wind, water and the sun, as these will always be available. Second, the economical aspect concerns creating a system that fairly distributes the resources that are available. Almost everything that is developed, bought or traded, comes from the nature. One way of contributing is to think about what we buy and how it is made. Thirdly, the social aspect is about acknowledging human beings as important resources in society. To be the best version of oneself, there are some prerequisites that are important, including equal opportunity for education, safety, food and medication. This offers opportunities both for people and for the planet. Ultimately, these three aspects must be seen

as interconnected and work together and at the same time for sustainable development to happen (United Nations, 2019).

In 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was introduced and adopted by all United Nations Member States. It provided a shared blueprint "for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" with 17 Sustainable Development Goals that aim to extinguish poverty, fight inequality and stop climate change within 2030 (United Nations, 2015). One of the main principles for the sustainable development goals is *Leaving no one behind*. This is a call for prioritizing the most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, refugees, ethnic and religious minorities, girls and indigenous people (United Nations, 2019).

In the last years there has been a growing international recognition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an "integral element of quality education and a key enabler for sustainable development" (UNESCO, no date). ESD is about developing competencies that empower individuals to reflect on their own actions, and UNESCO has outlined eight key competencies for sustainability: (1) system thinking competency, which is to recognize and understand systems and relationships, (2) anticipatory competency, which is about being able to create and evaluate visions for the future, (3) normative competency, which is about reflecting on norms and values, (4) strategic competency, which is about being able to develop and implement innovative actions, (5) collaboration competency, which is about being able to learn from, cooperate with and relate respectfully to others, (6) critical thinking competency, which is the ability to question norms, practices and opinions, (7) self-awareness competency, which is about reflecting on one's own role in society, and (8) integrated problem-solving competency, which is being able to apply problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability issues (UNESCO, 2017 in Guanio-Uluru, 2019, p. 6). Essentially, education is related to transformation, cross curricular thinking and deep learning, and it needs to be implemented in all subjects and practices in order to create new understanding and changed behaviour (Sinnes and Straume, 2017, p. 3 in Tørnby, 2020, p. 81). This also legitimizes sustainable development as an interdisciplinary topic to be worked with in all subjects.

Education for Sustainable Development should not only aim to promote theoretical knowledge about the environment and sustainability, but also develop students' ability to act towards a more sustainable world (Alsop & Bencze, 2014; Breiting & Mogensen, 1999;

Hodson, 2014 in Bjønness & Sinnes, 2019). This is supported by Sinnes (2015) who argues that the ultimate goal of ESD is to develop students' *"handlingskompetanse"* – translated to action competence. And this is done by developing other ESD competencies including creativity, critical thinking, systems thinking, communication and collaboration, future thinking and having a belief in the future (Sinnes, 2015). The call for developing action competence is based on the notion that there has been increased knowledge towards the environmental issues the last years, however, there has been little change in patterns of action done to prevent the issues. Jensen (2002) argues that "pro-environmental behavior", actions that have a positive impact on the environment, is dependent on outer factors to change. For example, if it is cheaper to take the train, people would most likely take the train more often – which is good to the environment. However, focusing solely on "pro-environmental behavior" does not necessarily contribute to environmental awareness. According to Jensen (2002) it is important to connect students' cognitive reflections to their actions (in Bjønness & Sinnes, 2019). In order to promote action competence for sustainable development, it could be argued that a holistic view on theoretical knowledge, attitudes and actions is important. Similar to democratic education, sustainable development should be "lived as well as taught" (McKeown & Hopkins, 2007, p. 22 in Bjønness & Sinnes, 2019).

Klein (2020) argues that if the aim of ESD is for students act for sustainability, the relationship between the head, heart and hand should be emphasized. In this manner, the head represents the cognitive aspect, while the heart represents the emotions and the affective aspect. The hand symbolizes the importance of applying the competence one has in practice. Moreover, when our thoughts and emotions are linked to our actions, we "live as we learn". If one of the basic motivations for human beings is to make sense of the world, it is essential to live life according to one's own values and the knowledge one possesses (Klein, 2020). In other words, action competence could be promoted and developed if the students are able to put what they learn into a context in order to create meaning from it.

3.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The core curriculum of LK20 states that students should develop "awareness of how our lifestyles impact nature and the climate, and thus also our societies" and "the willingness to protect the environment" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). Environmental awareness could be argued to be a prerequisite for developing such willingness. Before students can develop their

action competence and to engage in solving the environmental issues, they must learn about the how the physical environment is fragile and its resources indispensable.

The term environment could be hard to define, as it is applied in many different contexts. *Environment* can be defined as "the surroundings or conditions which a person, animal or plant lives and operates" (Lexico, no date). This can be related to several things, such as a learning environment or a workplace environment, or in sports there could be a competitive environment etc. *The environment* could be defined as "the natural world, as a whole or in particular geographical area, especially affected by human activity" (Lexico, no date). In terms of *Environmental awareness*, it is the latter definition that will be utilized in this section of the thesis.

Human lives depend on nature, but how nature's resources are used today has significant consequences. Climate emissions lead to temperature increase, the destruction of eco-systems and extinction of species. For this reason, there is a larger vulnerability towards natural disasters, such as flooding, hurricanes etc., and could lead to conflicts regarding nature's resources. One of the dilemmas that arises, is how the developing countries of the world release far less emissions than developed countries – but are faced with the biggest consequences (United Nations, 2019). Knowledge about such consequences of climate change affected by humans should therefore be an integral part of developing environmental awareness.

Environmental awareness can also be connected to environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is about "the moral relations that hold between humans and the natural world" which determines "our duties, obligations, and responsibilities with regard to the Earth's natural environment and all the animals and plants that inhabit it" (Taylor, 2011, p. 3). According to Scholz (2011), how humans cope with the environment depends on what they know and how they behave. However, what is considered environmentally harmful or desirable, may differ between individuals, groups or societies. For example, the impact of climate change is being treated and prioritized differently between different political parties and nations. Hence, the stance on environmental issues depends on "human interests, values, and knowledge" (Scholz, 2011, p. 6).

Crutzen (2002a) argues that the human species has become a major geological factor, and therefore the environment cannot be investigated or considered independently from human activities. The term *Anthropocene*, meaning "human centered" has been used by scientists to

express this viewpoint (in Scholz, 2011, p. 8). Anthropocene can be understood as the age or epoch we are currently living in, as well as a way of thinking about the world we live in. Hence, the "mutual and holistic affinity between nature and species" is crucial in today's society (Rimmereide, 2018, p. 208). The debate on human geological impact can therefore be linked to how the notion of the Anthropocene challenges the way humans think about society. An anthropocentric orientation towards the environment is about the notion that nature must be protected and preserved for the welfare and needs of humans. In contrast, an *eco-centric* or *biocentric*, also called *non-anthropocentric* orientation, is about protecting and respecting nature based on its own intrinsic value. From this point of view, humans have a responsibility to care about other species' existence and well-being (Gagnon-Thompson & Barton, 1994; Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005; Kortenkamp & Moore, 2001 in Altun, 2020).

The environmental issue is not a new phenomenon, but it was when the rapid industrialization after the 1950s, that started to change the planet in a more drastic way. Industrial agriculture, nuclear activity, global warming, plastic in the ocean and international tourism are some of the global problems we face due to human behaviors. However, the irony and paradox of the Anthropocene is that these problems are "now out of human control due to the rapid, unpredictable and non-linear change" (Head 2016, p. 5 in Rimmereide, 2018, p. 210). And it is for this reason, that it is crucial to enhance students' awareness, knowledge, attitudes and motivations to create an environmentally sustainable society (Liefländer & Bogner, 2014; Wals, 2007; Wells & Lekies, 2006 in Altun, 2020). Education should consider these different perspectives when reflecting on the motivation for environmental awareness when working with the interdisciplinary topic sustainable development.

3.3.3 ECOCRITICISM

The relationship between humans and nature has also been addressed within the concept of literature, commonly known as *ecocriticism* (Solak, 2012 in Tekbiyik & ÇElİK, 2019). According to Glotfelty (1996) the term ecocriticism can be described as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (in Aas, 2020). It does not only focus on nature, but rather an Earth-centered approach including topics such as animals, cities, technology etc. Ecocriticism is about analyzing the symbolic meanings attributed to nature, as well as the mindsets these meanings create, through interpreting literature and cultural texts from an environmental perspective. Moreover, it is about critically addressing

issues related to the environment and value judgements in the content of the text (Oppermann, 2012 in Tekbiyik & ÇElİK, 2019).

Ecocriticism has since 1990 been accepted as a critical theory focused on analyzing nature in cultural works, as it brings literary criticism and ecology together (Güngör, 2013 in Tekbiyik & ÇElİK, 2019). The notion that literature plays an important part in creating and changing human thought, it is only natural to argue for its role in contributing to the social responsibility of solving the environmental issues (Bulut Sarikaya, 2012 in Tekbiyik & ÇElİK, 2019, p. 178).

According to Guanio-Uluru (2019) an ecocritical perspective involves "examining how human-nature relationships are represented in literary texts, acknowledging the formative power of such representations" (p. 7). In other words, ecocriticism can be applied to *all* literary texts, even those that do not explicitly portray environmental issues. It is about being able to investigate the nature's role and how it is portrayed in the text and then to take a critical position towards the findings. As all texts are considered cultural products from the time they were written, they also contain established thought patterns that are part of shaping our understanding of the world – including our attitudes toward and understanding of nature and human beings (Guanio-Uluru, 2019).

In alignment with ESD, the interdisciplinary topic sustainable development aims to educate students to become aware of the significance of one's own actions and choices (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). As ecocriticism addresses the environment and environmental issues, it could be argued to be an asset within the context of ESD. As stated previously in this chapter, there are some key competencies for sustainability. Ecocriticism could in this case be connected to both *critical thinking competency* and *system thinking competency* (UNESCO, no date). Both competencies could be connected to Lim's (2015) understanding of critical thinking.

A prerequisite for maintaining and developing a democratic society, is informed citizens who think and act based on meaningful reflection, or in other words independent critical thinkers (Lim, 2015). According to Lim (2015), critical thinking involves more than just finding logical arguments to different problems. Although this is an important in developing critical thinking competencies, Lim (2015) argues that there is often a one-sided perspective of critical thinking that is being taught in schools today. He refers to *relational critical thinking*, which he argues to be essential in the development of future citizens in a deliberative

democracy. Relational critical thinking is about seeing the interconnections that exist in society, seeing things from different perspectives, and recognizing that the choices we make affect others. Essentially, Lim (2015) argues that this aspect of critical thinking is crucial if students are to be educated to recognize the complexity of the society in which they live – that goes beyond logical reasoning and argumentation.

Lim's (2015) understanding of relational critical thinking, can be connected to what Sinnes' (2015) describes as *systems thinking*. Systems thinking could then be argued to be an aspect of UNESCO's description of system thinking competencies. According to Sinnes (2015) system understanding is about seeing different elements in correlation with each other. In relevance to sustainable development, this can be understood as the ability to see how the environmental, economic and social aspects are interconnected. In other words, a system understanding can lead to recognition of the complexity in different issues and seeing that local actions can lead to global consequences (Sinnes, 2015).

Ecocriticism is about investigating correlations between nature and humans and can therefore be argued to be a valuable approach in developing students' action competence – by developing other important ESD competencies, such as critical thinking and systems thinking. Promoting environmental awareness through an ecocritical approach, is also a way of ensuring that the environmental perspective is considered equally important in sustainable development. Additionally, it offers an opportunity to reveal anthropocentric attitudes or confirm eco-centric attitudes in literature

3.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As this thesis argues, literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum. The following section in this chapter will include the findings and discussion on why literature is a valuable way of working with sustainable development, with a main focus on environmental awareness and ecocriticism.

3.4.1 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

As this chapter shows, education holds a crucial role in developing students who act responsibly and ethically, with environmental awareness (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). The scientific approach to environmental issues may engage some people, but for others it could appear as too abstract and unfamiliar. It is here that the role of literature has great power in

creating engagement for environmental issues and perhaps affecting people on a level that other texts may not. It should be noted that literature alone is not enough to create change, but it offers other ways of expressing the environmental issues than science or even politicians can. Nina Goga, a central researcher within the field of ecocriticism, argues that if literature can contribute to challenge established thought patterns, perhaps harmful ones, towards nature, there is potential to develop a more openness to change – that makes the world a better place for all ways of life, not just for humans (in Klungeland, 2017).

Literary texts are suitable for raising environmental awareness, because it presents readers with constructed environments and actions, which are "specifically shaped in order to socialize children and young adults into ways of being and behaving" (Guanio-Uluru, 2019, p. 6). One can argue that literary texts are positioned and positioning, and holds great power in terms of how meaning is drawn from it, also in relation to environmental aspects (Janks, 2010). Using literature to explore how nature is mentioned, both implicitly and explicitly, can contribute to the development of one's language repertoire about nature. As a result, such literary explorations may have an important effect on one's attitudes towards environmental issues (Klungeland, 2017). Hence, literature can be a valuable contribution to Education for Sustainable Development, where the goal is to promote attitudes and behaviors for a sustainable future.

As the theory section in this chapter presents, environmental issues have had an established position in literature for some time now. Questions concerning climate change and children's relationship to nature has secured a central place in literary works for children. One can often see how children's literature includes the portrayal of idylls, pastorals, animals, plants, and communication between different species (Goga, 2017 in Klungeland, 2017). Such environmental texts can according to Massey and Bradford (2011) "socialize young people into becoming the responsible and empathetic adults of tomorrow" (p. 109). Through reading experiences that approaches environmental issues, it opens for experiencing emotions and a feeling of global responsibility to preserve nature, and then become so called *ecocitizens* who think and act sustainably, locally and globally (Massey & Bradford, 2011).

According to Buell (1995), the ability to imagine the environmental crisis that the world faces today is an important step in becoming what Massey & Bradford (2011) refers to as ecocitizens. Buell (1995) argues that imagining through images and stories, may lead to a more reflective way of being towards human-made climate change (in Jota, 2018). Literary

texts are examples of material that holds significant imaginative potential, as it allows readers to live within the world of the narrative and imagine what it is like. This argument is supported by Andersen (2014) who believes that one of the basic functions of literature, is that it is a place where one's imagination can try different ways of action, and then to look at its value. Moreover, literature is a place to experiment with different alternatives for existence and societal models in a climate changed future (p. 111 in Jota, 2018).

One literary genre that is especially suitable for such imaginative exploration is dystopian or apocalyptic fiction. Dystopian fiction is a well-established genre in young adult literature and can also be a valuable contribution for promoting environmental awareness. Dystopian fiction emphasizes the issues on the climate crisis, and the topic of "humans vs. nature", and includes aspects of worry towards the destruction of nature caused by humans (Klungeland, 2017). For that reason, using dystopian fiction in the English subject is especially suitable for developing environmental awareness.

Dystopian fiction often includes elements of apocalypse. Apocalyptic literature can be described as literature that predict the fate of human kind, often presented through catastrophic events (Lothe, Refsum & Solberg, 2007, p. 12 in Jota, 2018). In terms of its imaginative potential, it is "the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (Buell, 1995, p. 285 in Jota, 2018). The reader's imagination is being tested when being brought into a climate changed future, and one must imagine a whole new world. Dystopian, apocalyptic narratives are fruitful for exploring the worst outcomes that may come from the global warning crisis (Aas, 2020). Margaret Atwood, known for her dystopian novels, argues that literature is an uttering, or outering of the human imagination. She states that "it [the literature] puts the shadowy forms of thought and feeling – heaven, hell, monsters, angels, and all – out into the light, where we can take a good look at them and perhaps come to a better understanding of who we are and what we want, and what out limits may be" (in Aas, 2020, p. 44). Relating to the consequences of environmental issues, and the importance of raising awareness, Atwood stresses that imagination is a necessity. She refers to William Blake who noted a long time ago, that human imagination drives the world. In other words, as the world has increasingly experienced through innovative technology and thoughts – "if we can imagine it, we'll be able to do it" (Atwood, in Aas, 2020, p. 44). Dystopian fiction can therefore be an effective way to promote environmental awareness, as readers can experience and imagine what the consequences of not preserving nature, or working towards a sustainable future, are. There is

a difference in knowing the consequences and feeling it on one's own body. It should be noted that apocalyptic fiction is not the only type of dystopian fiction that is relevant for promoting environmental awareness. For example, novels such as *Uglies* (2005) by Scott Westerfeld or *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry, describes futuristic post-scarcity worlds where the environment is strictly managed according to sustainable outcomes and/or human needs, would also be suitable for working with environmental awareness. Due to the scope of the thesis, I will not go into details about these literary works, but rather give them a mention.

Andersen (2014) states that literature that portrays aspects of the environmental crisis also has a critical potential (in Jota, 2018). The critical aspect comes to light when the reader is alarmed by imagining the consequences and is forced to see that as a possible future if nothing is being done. Using dystopian fiction can offer an alarming notice, and result in a sense of self-criticism and self-searching – and may affect one's everyday practices. In other words, literature can offer people who live in the present "a pair of long-term glasses, so that one's short-sightedness disappears" (Andersen, 2014, p. 110 in Jota, 2018, own translation). This aspect can be connected to ecocriticism, which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

3.4.2 USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE ECOCRITICISM

Environmental awareness can in many ways be considered as both a prerequisite, but also a desired outcome, for ecocriticism. As stated in the theoretical framework, ecocriticism is about "examining how the relations between humans and nature are represented in literary texts, acknowledging the formative power of such representations" (Guanio-Uluru, 2019, p. 7). Using texts that explicitly portray environmental issues, such as dystopian fiction, is an important aspect of ecocriticism. What could also contribute to challenge established thoughts and perspectives on how we understand and perceive nature's role in society, is to take an ecocritical approach to other texts as well. Critically exploring how language or visuals are used in literature, may create an openness towards how our thinking is affected through such representation. Reading literature from an ecocritical perspective can also contribute to develop a language that will help students navigate and participate in the debate on the environmental issues the world faces today.

Some central writers in the field of sustainable literature didactics include Nina Goga (2018a, 2018b), Marianne Røskeland (2018a, 2018b) and Geraldine Massey & Clare Bradford (2011)

(in Tørnby, 2020, p. 84). These writers use an ecocritical approach which focuses on the importance of nature to the text and the reader. According to Massey & Bradford (2011) "reader's understandings of ecocitizenship may be constructed as they engage with the texts" (p. 110 in Tørnby, 2020, p. 84). However, a prerequisite is that the reader adopts the reading position invited by the text, as this may lead to an adoption of the worldview that is advocated by the narrative in the literature (in Guanio-Uluru, 2019, p. 6). This can be connected to the concept of fictive reading competence, as it involves being able to set aside one's own worldview to enter the text on the text's premises too seek and develop one's understanding.

A central point in an ecocritical approach is whether nature is included on its own premises or if humans have a superior role (Tørnby, 2020). For example, in the picturebook *The Lorax*, nature is exploited by humanity, and it could be understood as the fate and future of the Earth is in the hands of humans. Another important aspect of an ecocritical approach is how the ideas of ecological crisis are portrayed in literature. The picturebook *This Is Not My Hat,* is another example of literature that is suitable to promote ecocriticism. It is set in the bottom of the ocean with natural surroundings such as fish, seaweed and kelp forests. The protagonist, a little fish, is given human characteristics in the story such as thought and speech, as well as a hat it cherishes deeply. However, this hat is a symbol of life above sea which makes it a displaced item in the story. Tørnby (2020) therefore argues that this picturebook could be used when working with topics such as pollution of sea life, consequences of plastic in nature, possible solutions to limit the use of plastic etc. (p. 86).

Using picturebooks that target these ideas, either directly or indirectly, is one way of addressing sustainability in the classroom. *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss was written in 1971 but is still highly relevant in terms of discussing environmental issues today. According to Tørnby (2020) it is "a remarkable picturebook that addresses man's greediness and exploitation of environmental resources" and "tells a tale of selfishness and industrialism" (p. 81). In short, the picturebook is about a young boy who meets the Once-ler who once lived in a beautiful place filled with forests and animal life. But because of his greediness and desire for wealth, the Once-ler destroys this wonderful world by cutting down trees and polluting the waters from factories he put up, in order to grow his business. The Lorax tries to stop the Once-ler, but it is only when the last tree is chopped and all the animals have gone away, that the Once-ler realizes the damage he has caused. In the end, he gives the young boy the last tree seed. The main message of this picturebook is indeed the consequences of what happens to nature if there is no regard for sustainability or the future. Tørnby (2020) argues that using *The Lorax*

in the classroom may "promote a profound understanding of complex ideas about economic growth, sustainability and a man's selfishness and shortsightedness" (p. 83). The combination of words and pictures, which starts out with a colorful world but ends up darker and greyish, can be linked to real world issues such as deforestation or the extinction of coral reefs. Exploring these issues in literary conversation from a starting point of *The Lorax*, may deepen students' perceptions of sustainability and environmental issues (Tørnby, 2020).

According to Goga (2019), ecocritical literary conversations is one way of promoting ecocriticism in the classroom. She states that a bridging between close reading of and conversations about literature may "evolve a critical approach to verbal depictions of multisensory nature experiences and hence contribute to increased awareness of ecological interplay" (p. 2). As a result, students could develop linguistic skills that they need in order to navigate in the environmental discourse and understand themselves as ecocitizens.

One central part of promoting ecocriticism, is the teacher's role in what the students should focus on in the reading (Goga, 2019). By giving the students specific reading «requests» (in Norwegian: *lesebestillinger*), for example to note down key words that say something about the landscape or environment or finding quotes that connect characters to their attention to nature. These reading requests, as well as listening to peers' suggestions, form the basis of students' meaning making of the text and will meet in the community of interpretation. Although the conversation is to be based on the text itself, and it is the text that decides what responses will appear, it is the teacher who directs students' focus through different reading requests. According to Goga (2019), it is when the students as part of a community become aware of how nature, experiences with nature, and understandings of nature are portrayed or shaped by language, that it is a valuable contribution to ESD. Being aware of how we sense, talk about or explain ourselves in relation to nature, especially with others, is important in working towards the sustainable goals. If this is not emphasized, then it would affect our ability to participate in a community of disagreement and understand that people have different viewpoints on nature preservation.

An important preparation phase for the ecocritical literary conversation is to support and organize one's own thoughts (Håland, 2016 in Goga, 2019). This can be done by asking the students to write reading logs, as a starting point for exchanging meanings together in class. Reading logs, or to write down one's initial thoughts, allows the students to independently and critically observe and compare their experiences with the text. This challenges the

students to express their own opinions and put into words their understanding from an ecocritical perspective. The reading requests sent by the teacher, could then work as a support, or scaffold, to get their thoughts going. This will ensure that every student produces work, and that every student's response only adds value to the conversation – even if they disagree. As the students become more comfortable with the text and with the dynamics of the ecocritical literary conversation, there is room for a more personal engagement and an opportunity for deep learning. Acknowledging one's own engagement – or lack thereof – towards nature, may lead to reflections and connections to one's own life and awaken an ecocritical way of thinking. For example, Goga (2019) exemplifies this with a ecocritical literary conversation about trees, where students are encouraged to think about their own relationship with trees: what trees do they know of? What trees do they meet in their everyday lives? Are their encounters with the trees in the text affected by their own experiences with trees? Could it be possible that how trees in the story are represented affects their thinking about trees in general? Such questions could potentially influence and expand students' understanding of humans as part of a community that includes other ways of life as well (Goga, 2019, p. 15). Ultimately, an ecocritical approach with such linguistic attention within literary texts in the English subject may be an active approach in contributing to Education for Sustainable Development.

Tekbiyik and ÇElİK (2019) also conducted a study on developing what they referred to as "ecocriticism skills", involved analyzing, interpreting, and examining language and visuals from an ecocritical perspective (p. 180). In the study, the students participated in discussions, drew mind maps and drew illustrations to analyze and criticize the consequences of environmental issues portrayed in the literary text. By questioning how the bond created with nature should be, students are more prepared to meet situations in life with a more critical, analytical and holistic approach. As an example, the students in the study were asked to produce their own literary written work and share this with their classmates. One student wrote in his/her story that "a jackal attacking chickens in a farm was killed by the farmer", which was criticized by a peer who argued that there should have been "less violent with no guns and killing" (p. 188). The implementation of such free writing activities, in combination with sharing these stories, could be argued to be a contribution in developing ecocritical skills of students because they get to question their own and others' use of language towards environmental issues. Furthermore, it opens for a discussion where the students may have different viewpoints and will have to express these to each other. Hence it could expand their

horizon and create new knowledge. Another finding in the study was the subject value that the students attributed to the life of living beings in nature and wildlife. This was seen in the emotional exposure of plants and animals against the destruction of nature in their drawings and discussions. The notion that these destructions were caused by humans, could promote an understanding of an "ecological self" (p. 188). Essentially, acknowledging the value of nature, as well as an awareness of humans' position within the whole, is a valuable contribution in the development of one's ecological self. Or in the words of Massey and Bradford (2011): the understanding of being an ecocitizen.

3.4.3 EXAMPLE: THE GIVING TREE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A good example of a picturebook when working with sustainable development is *The Giving Tree.* The story follows a young boy who spends every day with a tree he cares deeply about. As the boy grows older, he spends less and less time with the tree, but comes back on occasions when he needs something. The tree offers the boy its apples to sell, its branches to build a house, and its trunk to build a boat. In the end, the boy comes back to the tree as an old man, but the tree only has its stump to offer, but which is all the man needs (Silverstein, 2004).

Although this picturebook can be read for many different purposes, *The Giving Tree* is especially suitable for working with sustainable development and ecocriticism. In a thematic sense, it symbolizes how humans take from natural resources without paying much attention to the consequences. As the boy keeps taking and taking, the picturebook portrays how there is "no going back" if one takes too much from nature. This can be connected to human greediness, and students can discuss where the boundary should go between taking from nature for own gain, or when to stop.

One reading request that the students could get while working with this picturebook is to examine the first five words of the narrative: "There once was a tree". These words set nature in the front, challenging an anthropocentric viewpoint. The students could reflect and discuss human's dependency on nature, and what happens if humanity does not put back what it takes from nature. Hence, what could be a sustainable relationship between the tree and the boy, that ensures the needs of humanity but preserves nature's resources.

Another reading request could be to analyse the emotive qualities of the tree that often is associated with humanity. The emotional responses and sympathy that students could feel

when reading the text aesthetically, can be used to promote engagement and empathy towards how humans treat nature. It becomes easier to imagine being the tree who is taken advantage of or taken for granted that results in a negative impact on one's own life. The picturebook portrays the tree as generous and not bitter towards the boy. Students can discuss the dilemma of "what has nature done to deserve being treated like that?" Discussions revolving around these questions may bring to light a community of disagreement, as the students will have different experiences, opinions and interpretations. These disagreements must be considered valuable as students learn to deal with different points of view.

Reading *The Giving Tree* from an ecocritical perspective can be understood as normative. Relating back to the competencies for sustainable development, critical thinking is also about questioning established systems and norms. This could be argued to be a paradox, as the students should develop attitudes and values of the given society, but at the same time be allowed to meet these with a critical lens. It is a question of what is "right" and "wrong" in terms of environmental thinking, and if students really are "allowed" to make different argumentations than those who are ecocritical. Another important point is that the tree in the story can be understood as the victim, and the boy as the villain. This can lead to students who relate to the boy feeling villainized, which would not be favorable in solving the collective problem the world is facing. This is a dilemma that teachers must be aware when working with environmental issues and promoting ecocriticism as a way of working with sustainable development.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Due to the global environmental issues that the world is facing today, Education for Sustainable Development is essential in working towards a more sustainable future. The students should not only learn about the environment, but also develop attitudes and competences that prepares them for participation in solving the problem. The ultimate goal of ESD is to educate students to act based on their own reasoning and judgement, also referred to as *action competence* (Sinnes, 2015).

In order to develop action competence, students should gain knowledge of the physical environment and how its resources are indispensable. Developing students' environmental awareness is therefore an important part of ESD, where they can reflect on ethics revolving around environmental issues and the relations between humans and nature. However, how one

acts is dependent on human interests, values and knowledge (Scholz, 2011). Human's thinking about society, including the environment, is affected by an Anthropocene orientation about the world we live in. An anthropocentric orientation puts humans in the center, and that nature must be protected for the welfare of humans – and not for the welfare of nature itself, which is the understanding from an eco-centric point of view. Environmental awareness also concerns about the technological development, and the consequences this has on the environment and the way one lives.

Using literary texts that approaches environmental issues can contribute to develop an environmental awareness. Literary texts have an imaginative potential that opens for experiencing different worlds, also those who have faced consequences from the climate crisis. Dystopian fiction, including those with apocalyptic traits, are especially suitable for such explorations, as it serves as an alarming notice of what might happen if one does not actively work towards a more sustainable future. Dystopian fiction or other literature that portrays environmental issues can also be read from an ecocritical perspective.

Ecocriticism is about examining the role of nature in literary works, and how this representation affects how one thinks about the environment. It is about questioning whether nature is included on its own premises, or if humans have a superior role. This does not only include texts who explicitly present environmental issues, but ecocriticism is the notion that *all* texts can be read from an ecocritical perspective. To promote ecocriticism in the classroom, teachers can give students specific reading requests to focus their reading on things that has to do with the environment. Using independent activities where students can write down own thoughts and responses to the literature, in combination with ecocritical literary conversations, may be a valuable way of promoting sustainable development.

Teachers should, however, be aware of the paradox that ESD may come with. As students are to be educated to act responsibly with environmental awareness, they are also to be educated to be independent critical thinkers. Ecocriticism could be understood as normative, and so it should be. However, this also means that there is a dilemma in terms of *how* or *if* there is room for other viewpoints than those considered "right" from a societal point of view.

Based on what this chapter has argued, it is evident that the English subject can offer a significant contribution in ESD. Engagement with different literary texts and examining them from ecocritical perspectives may offer students with an expanded vocabulary and ways of expressing themselves in terms of environmental issues. Furthermore, it could challenge their

way of thinking about nature and their responsibility as ecocitizens – and then promote and develop their action competence, a key competence for a sustainable future.

CONCLUSION

USING LITERATURE TO PROMOTE THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TOPICS IN LK20

As this thesis has argued, ***literature is a valuable way of working with the interdisciplinary topics promoted in the new curriculum.*** The three main chapters of the thesis have given an overview of literature's role in promoting these topics in the English subject. Additionally, it has presented how the picturebook *The Giving Tree* can be used in the classroom to promote all three topics: health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. In this conclusion I will sum up the main points of each chapter, including how the three topics are intertwined. Finally, I will present some of the implications of this thesis and concluding remarks, including recommendations for further research.

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS & LITERATURE

The first chapter of this thesis dove into the first interdisciplinary topic: *health and life skills.* In the English subject, health and life skills refers to being able to express one's own feelings, thoughts, experiences and opinions in English. This forms a basis for providing "new perspectives on different ways of thinking and communication patterns, as well as on the pupils' own way of life and that of others" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). This aligns with the objectives of education, which are to prepare students for adulthood and to make good life choices, for themselves and others. The interdisciplinary topic health and life skills is closely connected to the concept of Bildung, where the focus should be on educating the whole person, including social and cultural aspects. An important part of Bildung is empathy, which is the ability to put oneself in others' shoes to seek understanding of their emotions, thoughts and actions.

Reading literature offers an opportunity to experience other people's realities and is therefore a valuable contribution for promoting Bildung and developing empathy. From the pedagogical viewpoint of Klafki (1996), there are three categories of Bildung: *material, formal* and *categorial Bildung.* The first two categories separate the objective content and the subjective reader. Bildung is then promoted through either the literary text itself, or within the reader with a focus on the technical skills of reading. In other words, it is about what is being read, such as canonical literature, or how one reads it, for example how to read texts fictively. Developing students' fictive reading competence could be considered as a way of promoting

formal Bildung, as it allows students to enter the text and seek understanding on the text's premises. According to Klafki (1996) it is a combination of these two, categorial Bildung, that is the ideal form of Bildung – in which the learning should be exemplary. As this thesis argues, literary conversations are valuable in terms of promoting categorial Bildung, as the interaction between the text and the reader is emphasized. Students can use a literary text as a starting point to create meaning and relate the reading experience and the discussion around the text to their lives outside of the classroom. Here, the teacher holds a crucial role to facilitate for a community of interpretation, where students can express their viewpoints and responses to the text. Hence, the students' responses must be considered and acknowledged as important. A literary conversation in the classroom can create a bridge between the text and the reader, as well as making sure students are confronted with others' readings and interpretations – which could challenge and expand their own understandings and interpretations. The teacher must select literature that holds potential for Bildung as well as facilitate for a dialogue that could promote Bildung in itself. Ultimately, a literary text and conversation could exemplify a situation or way of thinking, that students can recognize if they face similar situations in their own lives. However, it is important to recognize that each teacher brings one's own subjectivity in the selection of literature and facilitation of the conversation.

When it comes to empathy, literature can work as experiments to the human cognition, and challenge us to evolve. Living through the reality of fictive character can also contribute to develop emotional literacy, where one can imagine what it would feel like being in their shoes. Furthermore, students can develop a way of expressing their own emotions and thoughts, which is an important life skill. Developing narrative imagination will help students to realize that people can think, act and feel different from oneself. Students can learn to emphasize with others through literature, which is essential as a citizen of the world. One necessary consideration when teaching empathy, is whether the attempt of feeling empathy towards others that differs from oneself could result in narcissistic sameness. Using literature in the classroom is however a valuable arena to learn, develop and practice emphatic abilities, which is one of the cornerstones of health and life skills.

Using *The Giving Tree* in the classroom can be a valuable way of working with health and life skills, as it includes perspectives on many aspects related to Bildung and empathy. Reflecting on the emotions that are portrayed in the texts, as well as the emotions students experience when they read the picturebook, can contribute to a deeper understanding of oneself and of

others. Additionally, aspects on boundaries, and how to respect one's own and other's boundaries, can be discussed and students can reflect on what values and attitudes are important to live good lives. Hence, *The Giving Tree* is a valuable contribution in working with the interdisciplinary topic health and life skills.

DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP & LITERATURE

The second chapter of this thesis focused on the second interdisciplinary topic: *democracy and citizenship*. In the English subject, democracy and citizenship refers to helping the students understand that the world is culture-dependent, which can open up for "new ways to interpret the world, and promote curiosity, engagement and help to prevent prejudice" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Developing students' intercultural competence as it involves both their own culture(s) as well as those of others in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for communication across cultural backgrounds. An important part of intercultural competence is to navigate within different cultural contexts, including textual encounters. Therefore, developing students' critical literacy skills, where they can critically examine how texts work on them, is an important part of democracy and citizenship.

Using literature in the English subject, offers students access to different cultures and exposes them to cultural diversity. One way of developing students' intercultural competence is to include multicultural literature into the teaching practice, as it helps students identify their own cultures and opens a dialogue about other cultures. In this sense, culture must be seen as complex and dynamic, and hence *all* literary texts can be discussed from a cultural perspective. Multicultural can be a valuable tool to ensure students learn *about, through* and *for* cultural encounters. Literary texts that celebrate cultural diversity can offer an opportunity for students to gain knowledge about different cultures than one's own. As knowledge is considered power, reading multicultural literary texts could empower students with openness and respect for diversity. In this way, literature can contribute to perpetuate and dissolve stereotypes and promote representation – which are essential democratic values. Further, working with multicultural literature can develop students' skills by learning through cultural encounters, as students can interpret the literary content, relate it to their own lives, discover new understandings, and interact with other readers. It also offers an opportunity to practice these skills, as they are essential as democratic citizens in the meeting with cultural others. Lastly, working with literature can be a valuable way of developing students' attitudes that align with democratic citizenship, as it allows students to experience that their own culture is

not neutral, and that one literary text can have different interpretations. In this way, students and teachers are invited to examine their own beliefs and assumptions by questioning how cultural aspects affect one's interpretations and understanding. Developing such critical cultural awareness is therefore an important part of fostering attitudes for intercultural competence and exploring implicit and unexamined biases.

In a society full of textual meanings, developing students' critical literacy skills is crucial. Working with literature allows students to deconstruct and reconstruct textual meanings and connect them to larger social issues, as it could offer a variety of perspectives within the narrative. The students must be given the tools to critically analyze what they read, and literary discussions in the classroom can be a helpful way of exploring different issues such as prejudice, intolerance, racism, inequality, or untruths. Critical literacy is about reading both *with* and *against* a text. Aesthetic reading of literature, or reading texts fictively, is important for reading with texts – even, and especially, texts which offend us. Trying to put oneself in someone else's situation could lead to understanding why people think, act or feel like they do, and for students to become more emphatic citizens. It is also important for students to learn resistant reading in order to reveal the textual power that is present. Reading against texts – even, and especially, those which we are comfortable with, is important for challenging own understandings. Using literature in the classroom is a way of including both an engaged position and an estranged position to a text, which fosters emphatic, critical individuals who can make judgements based on democratic principles.

Using *The Giving Tree* can be an example of a valuable way of working with democracy and citizenship in the classroom. The aspect of intercultural competence comes to light in the diversity of interpretations in the student group. When students can express their own viewpoints and responses as well as listening to their peers' responses, they can see that every reading is unique – and that their individual responses are a valuable contribution in the learning process. Being exposed to other interpretations and understandings can also open for students to go back to their own and adjust these. Furthermore, the picturebook can be read from a critical perspective by for example discussing how the author has gendered the tree in the story. Exploring such political and democratic issues can challenge students' way of thinking and encourage them to reflect and discuss the effects of such portrayals in literature.

The third chapter of this thesis revolved around the third interdisciplinary topic: *sustainable development.* In the English subject curriculum, sustainable development is not included as an interdisciplinary topic. As this thesis argues, the three topics are all connected and the environmental crisis is considered one of the world's largest global issues, which makes the choice of not including this topic explicitly in the English subject questionable. However, all teachers should base their teaching practice on the whole curriculum, including the core curriculum, which legitimizes why I have included sustainable development in this thesis. Relevant aspects to be drawn from sustainable development is environmental awareness and ecocriticism, as both are concerned with humans' effect on nature and different ways of thinking and talking about the environment. In order to develop students' action competence for a sustainable future, they need to understand and challenge the anthropocentric view on nature that exists today. Ecocriticism is about exploring and analyzing the symbolic meanings attributed to nature in literature and how these meanings affect our mindsets about nature. Ecocriticism could therefore be argued to be an important contribution to Education for Sustainable Development, as it promotes the notion that *all* texts can be read from an ecocritical perspective. Hence, ecocritical reading of literary texts can help students to become aware of how one's own actions and choices affect the environment.

Literature offers an opportunity to create engagement for environmental issues and affect readers in a way other texts may not and can contribute to challenge established thought patterns about nature. Exploring how nature is portrayed in literary texts, both implicitly and explicitly, can have an important effect on one's attitudes towards the environment and promote behavior that supports sustainability. Using literature that approaches environmental issues can contribute to the development of ecocitizens, as the reading can trigger emotional and intellectual responses that prompt a feeling of global responsibility towards nature. Storytelling through literature is a powerful way to imagine and reflect on human-made climate change and allows students to explore different ways of action to look at its value. Dystopian fiction is one example of literature that can promote students' environmental awareness, because it allows students to imagine the consequences of not taking care of the planet and to encourage them to act sustainably. Literature with such apocalyptic features could be argued to be the single most powerful metaphor, where one can imagine the worst outcomes of global warming and the environmental crisis. Being able to feel the consequences by living the reality within the story can have a powerful impact compared to

only knowing about them. This may serve as an alarming notice and open for critical reflection which may affect one's everyday practices.

Ecocriticism is about examining literature that portrays environmental issues, but it is also about the notion *all* texts can be read from an ecocritical perspective. Critically exploring authors' linguistic and visual choices in literature may create an openness for how our thought patterns are affected by such representations. Furthermore, working with literature from an ecocritical perspective may develop students' vocabulary and language repertoire which will help them navigate and participate in the environmental discourse. Ecocritical literary conversations could help students understand the complexity of the problem. A combination of close, aesthetic reading of a literary text and exploring the responses and interpretations in a class conversation is one way of promoting ecocriticism. Here, it is crucial that the teacher guides the students and helps them on what to focus on in the reading, for example through a reading request. It is when the students as part of a community together become aware of the different ways nature is presented in literary texts, that it is a significant contribution to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Furthermore, the teacher has an important role in getting students' thoughts going so that they can contribute with their own thoughts in the conversation. Acknowledging one's own engagement, or lack of engagement, towards nature can awaken reflections and an ecocritical way of thinking. The diversity of responses within the group about environmental issues must also be acknowledged and considered valuable for ESD, as it could challenge and expand students' horizons and create new knowledge. Ultimately, working with literature from an ecocritical perspective can increase students' understanding of what it means to be ecocitizens.

Using *The Giving Tree* can be an example of a valuable way of working with sustainable development, as it thematizes environmental issues and the importance of sustainability. The picturebook symbolizes how natural resources are used without much attention for the consequences. This opens for a discussion about human greediness and the boundaries of when to take from nature and when to stop. From another ecocritical perspective, the author has made linguistic choices that puts the tree at the center of the story, which could challenge an anthropocentric viewpoint and highlight human's dependency on nature. The emotional aspect of this story is also a valuable contribution to promote ESD, as the students can imagine what it would feel like to be the tree in the story. Some students might relate to the boy in the story and therefore it is important to bring these responses in the discussion as well.

Teachers must be aware the dilemma that comes with promoting normative attitudes, but still foster an environment for critical thoughts and questions towards these.

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUDING REMARKS

As this thesis has argued, literature is a valuable way of working with all the three interdisciplinary topics. English is an important subject when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, all-round education and identity development (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). Bringing literary texts into the English classroom offers many important dimensions within the objectives of the subject and the interdisciplinary topics. First, working with literature in the English subject offers opportunities for language learning and enhancing reading skills in a foreign language, as well as it opens doors to the global world. Second, collectively working with and discussing a literary text and the responses it triggers is a way of developing students' oral skills as well as how to interact with others according to democratic principles. Focusing on both on the immediate experiences while reading and reflections afterwards, working with literature can have a powerful impact on the students and prepare them for life outside of the classroom.

The three topics naturally build upon each other, and mutually affect one another, which is why it is problematic to separate them into three independent topics. However, the way LK20 has presented them, can be understood as a sort of higher-level thinking: moving from a main focus on the individual, then to the society and lastly to the environment. Yet, the life skills that students should develop is dependent on the society which they will take part in, as well as how to live life in a way that is sustainable. In order to participate as a democratic citizen, one needs individual knowledge, skills and attitudes which enables them for such participation. The collective responsibility to maintain and develop the democracy depends on emphatic abilities and respect for others, as well as the ability to think critically towards established norms. One of the most important collective missions of today's society is the environmental issues and working towards a sustainable future includes aspects of those found in health and life skills and democracy and citizenship. Ultimately, by working with this thesis, these interconnections have become even clearer, and it has shown how literary texts have the potential of contributing to these important aspects of education.

There is however an issue that cannot be overlooked when working with these topics. Education builds upon normative grounds with attitudes and values that are considered "the

right ones", but at the same time it encourages critical thinking. Both aspects are important for personal growth, democratic citizenship and sustainable development. However, the dilemma arises when these are met in the everyday teaching practice. Teachers must find a way to include both aspects, where the normative views of society are emphasized, but at the same time allowing curiosity, critique and questioning of these values in the classroom. It is in the meeting between emphatic tolerance and independent, critical thinking that a community of disagreement can be created. There is no key answer as to when a teacher will face a conflicting situation, but one must be prepared for how to meet them. Ultimately, if a teacher can facilitate for students to express their opinions, being open to other perspectives, and learning to ask critical questions where the dialogue itself is considered a valuable learning outcome – then it could be argued that the students learn to see their value and resources they can bring to become active members of society. And as this thesis has argued, working with literature in the classroom is a valuable way of doing so.

This thesis has provided a solid theoretical foundation in relevance to the use of literature in the English subject to promote the interdisciplinary topics in LK20. As the new curriculum now is gradually being implemented, recommendation for further research could include empirical studies on teachers' understandings of the topic by using qualitative interviews. Teachers' understandings of the use of literature to promote the interdisciplinary topics could be a natural bridge from this theoretical framework. Moving beyond the subjective interpretations, it could also be valuable to research what is being done in the English subject, by observing various English classrooms and their use of literature.

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