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**Developing Critical Literacy Skills Through English Textbooks  
in Norwegian Upper Primary School**

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“So here you are, too foreign for home, too foreign for here. Never enough for both. “

(Ijeoma Umebingyuo)

# Acknowledgements

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# Abstract in English

The focus of this study was to investigate to what extent English textbooks for Norwegian upper primary school students, written for the new LK-20 English curriculum, help develop Critical Literacy skills. The study outlines the key principles of Critical Literacy as described by Vasquez and Janks among others: that no text is neutral but is influenced by the author's views and that the reader reads it from a background of own views and experiences. Students need to be asked questions that challenge their thoughts, enabling them to look behind the surface content of a text and question its intended purpose, its reliability and whose version of reality is presented or omitted.

With a view to the information overload in a modern society, the study argues that it is not enough to be proficient in Critical Literacy solely in Norwegian classes in Norway, but that Critical Literacy should be taught whenever the opportunity to do so arises, and that English classes should be no exception. It further makes the argument that the aim for English users in Norway should be primarily to become effective users of the language for communication, interests and activities, and not necessarily to achieve a "native" accent.

The study looks at whether the new English textbooks written in accordance with the new LK-20 curriculum represent the modern Norwegian multi-ethnic society as opposed to older textbooks positioning the reader as tourist in English-speaking countries. Furthermore, the study looks for examples of Englishes as a global family of similar languages that differ from standard British Received Pronunciation. Finally, it explores whether a Critical Literacy-conscious teacher will find suitable material for her students to question.

Using a qualitative method, a preliminary set of Critical Literacy-supporting categories was designed, and three chapters with a similar topic from three different 6th grade English language learning textbooks used in Norwegian classrooms were analysed.

The study concluded that while all three chapters offered individual texts that a Critical Literacy-conscious teacher may find suitable for Critical Literacy activity in her class, none of the chapters contained contrasting or contradictory texts that would trigger spontaneous Critical Literacy activity on their own, and they did not appear to be written with Critical Literacy specifically in mind.

## Sammendrag på norsk

Denne oppgaven ser på hvorvidt engelske lærebøker for mellomtrinnet, skrevet for de nye LK-20-læreplanene, støtter elevenes utvikling av Critical Literacy (jeg har valgt å bruke det engelske begrepet, siden det ikke finnes et fullverdig tilsvarende begrep på norsk). Den tar for seg de grunnleggende prinsippene for Critical Literacy slik blant andre Vasquez og Janks har beskrevet dem: at en tekst ikke er nøytral, men er påvirket av forfatterens synspunkter, og at leseren leser den ut fra egne erfaringer og kunnskaper. Elevene må bli stilt spørsmål som utfordrer måten de tenker på og gjør dem i stand til å se “bak” teksten og stille spørsmål ved tekstens intensjon, troverdighet og hvem som er inkludert eller ekskludert.

På grunn av overfloden av informasjon som er tilgjengelig i et moderne samfunn, argumenterer oppgaven for at det ikke er nok at elevene skal få innblikk i Critical Literacy i norsktimene, men at Critical Literacy må være på timeplanen når muligheten byr seg, og at engelsktimene ikke bør være et unntak. I tillegg argumenterer oppgaven for at målsetningen for engelskelever i Norge bør være å bli effektive brukere av språket, og ikke nødvendigvis å oppnå en “innfødt” aksent.

Opgaven ser på om de nye lærebøkene representerer det moderne, multietniske Norge i motsetning til eldre læreverk som gjerne plasserte leseren som turist i et engelskspråklig land. I tillegg leter den etter eksempler på global engelsk - lokale varianter som skiller seg fra offisiell britisk engelsk i rettskrivning eller uttale. Sist, men ikke minst, undersøker den om det finnes tekster en lærer kan dra nytte av for å utvikle elevenes Critical Literacy-evner.

Det ble benyttet en kvalitativ forskningsmetode, der det ble utviklet et preliminært sett av kategorier som kunne ansees som Critical Literacy-fremmende, og deretter ble tre kapitler med lignende tema fra tre engelsk-læreverk for 6. trinn analysert.

Studien fant at selv om alle tre kapitlene inneholdt noen tekster som kan brukes i Critical Literacy-sammenheng, inneholdt ingen av dem motstridende eller kontrasterende tekster som kunne vekke spontan Critical Literacy-aktivitet på egen hånd, og det virket ikke som om noen av dem var skrevet med tanke på Critical Literacy.

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# Introduction

## Background

I became interested in Critical Literacy (hereafter CL) because it strikes very close to home - both with regards to my own experience as a pupil from a foreign country and as a teacher in Norway.

As a young girl, attending an international school in the suburbs of a small town in Kenya; better described as in the middle of nowhere, the books we were presented all seemed to have to do with life in Europe and the rest of the western world. Essentially, we were tourists to the Western world. Fairy-tales and nursery rhymes that were what the average British child was expected to know - because the curriculum was based on the Cambridge and Oxford GCE curriculum. Apart from lessons in “Civics” and Kiswahili, as an extracurricular activity, everything African was presented through a Western view of Africa: Livingstone as the great, heroic explorer.

It didn't strike me as odd at the time, as I had an English father and was considered a foreigner by my peers throughout my early school years. Nevertheless, our hired staff spoke in their own languages while raising us, so we picked up their languages too besides English and learnt different cultural norms through local songs, rhymes and proverbs, almost becoming “true” Africans in our peers' eyes.

Moving to Norway in the early 90's turned the tables. Once again, I was regarded as a foreigner, but this time because I had a Kenyan mother, and as the years went by, I was never fully accepted as a Norwegian by my peers. Never mind my fluent English and thorough knowledge of English culture and literature - as I had these cultural connections to Africa, surely I should be able to run really fast, or be the rhythm queen on the dance floor. It turned out that my peers in Norway had an image of a single country called Africa I didn't know about - riddled with war, famine, disease, poverty, crimes and wild animals. Where did this image of Africa come from? There is no simple answer here, but I gather some of it may have come from cinemas, television, children's songs and books - presumably textbooks among them (Hoo the Hottentot and the job description of Pippi Longstocking's father springs to mind).



Now sitting at the teacher's desk, in an elementary school in the suburbs in the southeast of Oslo, teaching English among other subjects, two thirds of the learners have a different background than mainstream Norwegian, just like myself. This means young learners have other languages, culture and religion that they practice in their home environment. With their diversity, and variable contact from different perspectives with the Norwegian main society, they all have something valuable to bring to the table. Coming together in the English classroom creates a common ground where everyone participates on an equal basis, creating an environment that is the common denominator for good learning.

How do they see themselves, their friends, their local community - and equally, those communities their families originally hail from (which they might know and have visited) - reflected in the textbooks? Are there actual representations of not only a typical Norwegian school class, but even a typical Oslo East school class - someone they can identify with? If the students find themselves omitted or silenced in the school textbooks, CL should provide openings for class discussions, as when Vasquez' class decided to take action when their new classmate arrived from the Philippines and the class found no books on the Philippines in the school library (Vasquez, 2010b, p. 1).

Textbooks have several purposes beyond the knowledge they are trying to transfer to the students. One purpose that may be overlooked is to instil pride in one's own country and what it has to offer in the students, and help them to be able to act as an advocate for its culture and traditions. Another is to present what wonderful scenery Norway has to offer to children seldom travelling beyond the city borders. I recall a lesson I once held for my class in their 6th year when I was showing them pictures of well-known national parks and other iconic sceneries of Norway. Some of the children, who for various reasons had not had the opportunity to travel outside the borders of the capital, gasped - and the questions rolled in as to whether this really was their country, and how could it possibly be so dramatically different to the area where they live. They started to discuss whether they ever would have an opportunity to visit these places. Excitement rose even higher when I showed them photos of myself with earlier classes on some of the locations, and told them that they, too, would go before leaving for secondary school. Some Norwegians take this beauty for granted, while others are unaware it exists or believe that they do not have access to the magic.

Beyond the challenges of representation or silencing of students, and students learning to become proud advocates of Norway, one particular comment I frequently encounter from the

pupils is “*We learn most of our English outside the classroom.*” Of course, they are choosing activities that interest them, but then the challenge is to make what they read in the textbooks more interesting and meaningful to the pupils on a personal level. They may learn more English in class than they are aware of (or give the teacher credit for), but it made me think of the vast exposure to information today’s young learners encounter from so many different channels - television, movies, games, and the Internet, which has much information and learning opportunities to offer, but also carries the threat of misinformation and fake news on social media. How, then, do we teach our students to navigate this information jungle - making sense of a chaotic world? CL skills is an obvious answer, not only in English, but across the curriculum.

## The need for Critical Literacy skills in English

The information overload that everyone encounters in a modern information society, and the massive amount of English Norwegian students are exposed to in the same information society requires the ability to read, examine and evaluate the received information in a critical manner. English today is a global language, not only due to the Internet and the financial, cultural and political importance of some of the countries where English is spoken natively, but also because other countries have adopted English as a second national language or use English as a Lingua Franca in large parts of the world. The very early introduction of English in Norwegian schools and the amount of English the students encounter in their daily activities outside the classroom makes the CL skillset - the ability to question and validate information, to put it into context and to discover underlying patterns and possible hidden intentions - increasingly important, not only in Norwegian, but also in English for Norwegian learners. Therefore, looking at the possibility of CL activities - and the challenges involved - in the context of the English classroom was an idea that appeared early on during the planning of this master study.

CL is about recognizing that no text (text in its broadest sense: all methods of conveying a meaning visually or orally) is completely objective or neutral, but is shaped by its author's views and standpoints, and is designed to affect its reader. Neither is the reader completely neutral, but has views, standpoints, previous knowledge and experiences that will affect the reading. Important questions to ask when reading from a CL point of view are:

- What is this text trying to do to me, and why?

- Whose voice is heard, and whose voice is silenced or ignored?
- What would happen if this was re-told from a different perspective?

As a teacher, it's a duty to encourage the learners to ask these kinds of questions that challenge their thoughts and be aware of the world around them.

Reading between the lines, the entire LK-20 national curriculum hints at CL so often that it is pertinent to ask why the actual phrase is only used in supporting documents, such as The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (hereafter Udir) Knowledge base for quality criteria for teaching aids in Norwegian, which states in “7.1: Text in context” that “Critical literacy, or critical text competence, is about more than good reading and writing skills and source criticism. It is about being able to view a text in context and being able to ask the exploratory questions” (Udir, 2019b, my translation). In the Norwegian subject, the new LK-20 curriculum calls for CL activity, even though the term CL is not explicitly used in the new curriculum. The term “literacy”, however, is difficult to translate into Norwegian with only a single word, as the scope of literacy is so wide. UNESCO defines literacy in this way:

“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. 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 society.” (UNESCO, 2004, p. 13).

The LK-20 states in Core Values: 2.2.: Competence in the subjects that

“Competence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations. Competence includes understanding and the ability to reflect and think critically.” (Udir, 2020a)

The Core Values encompasses all subjects. It therefore stands to reason that CL-type activity should happen in all subjects when possible, including English. This is in accordance with the general CL principle that CL should be lived.

With CL activities in mind, the textbook used in English classes should be an important resource for the teacher in the task of developing these CL skills. The more the experienced teacher is able to select and use texts from elsewhere, the less important the texts in the

textbook become. However, it is still a central resource in the English classes in many classrooms, there are many teachers that depend on the English textbook, and thus its contents are important, not only as a source of new words, phrases and places, but also as a source of various viewpoints and facts that might be read with a critical view - if the teacher is up to the task. Therefore, it becomes important to look beyond the usual things such as whether the text is easy to understand or illustrates a key point grammar-wise, and think about how well the text resonates with the pupils: is it interesting? Do they see themselves and their neighbourhood mirrored in any way? Is the text thought-provoking in any way? Are there any texts with an opposing viewpoint - a different perspective? Traditionally, many textbooks have introduced the students to traditional native English-speaking milieus - making them tourists in another country, not using English to discuss Norwegian problems or explaining Norwegian customs or activities to a visiting foreigner. A part of this study will investigate whether the new textbooks still position the pupils as tourists/observers, or as active participants. Do they invite the pupils to reflect on, question and re-work the contents of the texts?

This study has used general modern-day CL theory, as described by Vasquez, Janks, Comber, Luke & Freebody and Green among others as its foundation. CL in Norwegian classrooms have been the focus for several earlier studies: on English textbooks in secondary schools, focusing on the tasks in the textbooks (Tangeraas, 2020), 10th grade EFL textbooks, also focusing on the textbook tasks (Børve, 2019), CL in Norwegian classes in upper secondary schools (Fosby, 2019) and CL in KRLE (Knowledge of Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics) in secondary schools (Nilsen, 2018). However, none have had both the texts *and* tasks in upper primary school LK-20 English textbooks as their focus.

This study examines whether English textbooks in Norwegian upper primary schools help develop students' Critical Literacy skills.

In order to make this examination, the following research questions were asked:

- Do current English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools support the development of Critical Literacy skills, and if so, in what way?
- How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools position the reader?
- How is diversity represented in English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools, worldwide, in Norway and in the Norwegian classroom?

- How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools represent the various countries and communities presented in the texts?
- How do English textbooks represent the different varieties of Global Englishes?

## This study - a short overview

The first chapter, Theory, introduces the fundamental theoretical concepts of CL with a brief overview of its historical background. The chapter then explains the key CL principles for working with young children, according to Vasquez, and describes three major CL models (Luke & Freebody's Four dimensions model, Green's 3D model and Janks' Interdependent model, which all describe the various aspects or dimensions in the literacy models as mutually interdependent. The chapter also looks at the status of English in Norway, both by way of Kachru's three circles of Global Englishes and how the curriculum interprets this for Norwegian learners in English classes. The concept of English as a global language, together with the challenges of doing CL activity in English, is discussed, and finally the traditional position of authority textbooks used in Norwegian schools and how this may present a challenge when attempting to read from a CL perspective.

The second chapter presents the methodology, chosen analysis method, the selection criteria and the selected books in the study. The method approach is presented, along with the analysis categories developed with the research questions in this study as a basis. Finally, it presents reflections on ethics, validity and reliability.

The third chapter presents the findings of the three selected chapters from textbooks with initial impressions, a discussion on the findings and some final thoughts on the analysed chapters.

The conclusion presents some suggestions for improvements in future textbooks, discusses possible weaknesses in the study and possible topics for further studies.

# Chapter 1: Theory

## 1.1: Introduction

Having discussed the importance of English skills in Norway in a modern multimedia society and the corresponding need for applying CL principles when communicating in English as well as in Norwegian, it is time to look closer on those principles and the terms involved - for instance what the phrase “reading a text” really means in CL terms. This chapter looks at the background for modern CL and its key principles, and also at Vasquez’ CL work with very young children, since this study applies CL principles in a second language where upper primary school students may have a vocabulary less extensive than in their first language. The argument is made that, provided that the students are familiar with the concept of CL in their first language, they should also be able to apply the CL principles in English. Further on, three CL models are presented, followed by the concept of *Englishes* as a family of related languages across the globe that differ somewhat in vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. Finally, the chapter looks at what the LK-20 curriculum has to say about the status of English in Norway and about CL. The changing role of textbooks over time and the challenges a textbook faces in a modern information society where students may access information directly from elsewhere is also discussed.

## 1.2: What is Critical Literacy?

CL is a critical and analytical perspective to use on any form of communicative text. It involves the ability to identify, understand, interpret, and create texts. (Vasquez, 2014a) It is about examining a text from different viewpoints and trying to discover the relationship between the language in the text and existing power structures. However, the term “text” as used in the context of CL needs a further explanation. In CL, all forms of communication conveying a message is a text - oral, written, drawn, images and cartoons, multimedia. There are no specific CL texts - all texts can be read critically (Vasquez, 2010a).

CL is also referred to as “a way of being” - a framework or a perspective from which to observe and analyse the world, how the observer perceives the world and relates to every received message (Vasquez, 2014a). The aim is to figure out how systems and institutions work

to position people, to unpack the relationship between meaning systems (language / art / maths) and power. Some power relations are easy to spot, some are less obvious.

Most people understand the power relations and meaning in fairy tales. There are many traditional fairy tales that will typically include a prince that comes along and saves a princess in distress, and they end up in marriage and live happily ever after in a castle. With a CL perspective, girls and boys might now read these stories differently. Is marriage the only option for the two? Is a castle the only place they could set up home? Could one imagine an ending where they did not live happily ever after - perhaps the relationship ended up with one of them finding out they had a different sexual orientation and ended up on a soul-searching adventure across the world, setting up home in a microhouse giving up all their belongings? Our background, our beliefs and everything we know and have read or heard influences the way we think when approaching these stereotypes.

The fact that our knowledge and prior experiences affect our understanding is also relevant in other subjects, such as how to explain the phenomenon of snow when the discussion is being held in a science class, somewhere in the middle of the Sahara. Is it just a theoretical concept - a phase transition where a substance changes from a liquid to a solid? How could one possibly truly understand the meaning of that part if one has never seen ice, or snow, but just read about a totally alien idea in a textbook or magazine. Someone from the tropics, where snow is just something white you can see on a high mountain top from afar, like on the top of Mt Kilimanjaro: is it then a known concept within one's consciousness or experience? How can one even begin to imagine the practical aspects of being surrounded by this element? As an illustration, how can one value the positive experience of Disney's use of winter cosiness in their animation films associated with Christmas, or activities of basking in the snow, like skiing, or building snowmen - or that the white snow on a dark winter's night reflects any available light, making it less dark? Or indeed, how would this particular individual be able to assess the risks involved in walking outside on a slippery path with bad shoes or being outside in a bad snowstorm while driving on an icy road?

Every reader comes with an individual collection of experiences, knowledge, ideas and perceptions which will affect the way they will extract meaning from a text - even if it is exactly the same words and the same images that are being presented to a group of readers. The reader's understanding of the meaning of any text is a result of the interaction between the intention, the experiences and discourses of the person who utters the meanings or creates the

texts, and those of the listener/viewer/reader. The more aware a reader is of these factors, the better she or he is equipped to read a text in a CL manner.

### 1.3: The background for modern Critical Literacy

CL began as an effort to teach students how to gain the ability to question the world around them, find and use their own voice, reveal and challenge existing power structures and social imbalance, taking steps to correct and rewrite in order to build a better and more equal society.

Developed initially by Paulo Freire, CL was a means of assessing social justice through education. Freire's approach to literacy and the process of emancipation evolved through his work to empower the poor. The idea of literacy had to have meaning and benefit to the people and their daily lives. Therefore, Freire, through his socialistic perspective, believed that it would be more effective to establish an understanding of a social context and its consequences through CL - a process of not only reading the word, but the world, in order to dismantle social injustice and inequalities - to find out what people's individual needs are and develop their literacy on that basis rather than just teaching the skills of meaningless reading and writing. Freire was opposed to what he called a banking-style educational system - where students were regarded as empty vessels, expected to be filled by the knowledgeable teachers, the keepers of wisdom and thus belonging to a better class. The alternative, he said, was that students already had experience and prior knowledge, and that teachers must learn together with the students. A concept that is in accordance with Vasquez' explanation that CL cannot be taught but needs to be lived. The teacher must be aware of the spaces that appear, like when her students began to explore how McDonalds were thinking when they handed out gender-based toys in the children's menu (Vasquez, 1999, pp. 258-269).

Through observation and discussion, an understanding of community development needs and factors develops. Resources based on appropriate language and relevant reading and literature have been created to best support the community and to address the factors of working in the community, learning literacy skills in a concrete and explicit context that covers issues that are important to them led to the conclusion that literacy is an important central process that they achieve for the development of their own situation.

“The act of reading cannot be explained as merely reading words since every act of reading words implies a previous reading of the world and a subsequent rereading of the



world. There is a permanent movement back and forth between “reading” reality and reading words - the spoken word too is our reading of the world.”

(Freire, 1985, p. 18)

In other words, the reader already has experience with the world when reading the text, and the understanding of the contents of the text is based on this experience - and the reader’s perception of his or her own reality may change after reading the text. In turn, this change in perception may alter the reader’s understanding of the contents after a reread.

“I always say to the students with whom I work, “Reading is not walking on the words; it’s grasping the soul of them.”” (Freire, 1985, p. 19)

Subsequent researchers and theorists have built on and expanded Freire’s ideas. Their focus and framework may differ in some aspects, but the common theme is uncovering and exploring existing power structures, inequality and bringing about social change, as Barbara Comber points out: “Critical literacy pedagogies are underpinned by theories of social justice” (Comber, 2015, p. 362).

## 1.4: Key principles in modern Critical Literacy

CL is about more than reading some specific CL articles or texts - it’s more a mindset - a framework or a perspective from which to observe and analyse the world, how the reader perceives the world around and relates to every received message. Vasquez says that “a critical literacy curriculum needs to be lived. It arises from the social and political conditions that unfold in communities in which we live.” (Vasquez, 2014a, p. 1). Nevertheless, as Vasquez has argued: “Often issues of social justice and equity seem to be looked upon as heavy-handed issues. The discussions I have had with my students and the children who have participated in my research, the actions we took, and the work we accomplished, although often serious, were very pleasurable. We enjoyed our work because the topics that we dealt with were socially significant to us.” (Vasquez, 2007, p. 7).

A reader with experience from CL may ask questions like the following, but when working with young children, these questions must be rephrased and simplified. The aim is to engage the children in texts they find problematic or unfair, to recognise everyday issues and try to do something about it, such as discussing alternatives or redesigns of problematic texts.

- What is this text trying to do to me?
- Whose interests are marginalized or privileged by this text?
- Whose voices are silenced?
- Whose voices are dominant?
- Whose reality is presented or ignored?
- What are the positions from which I am reading this text?
- What experiences am I drawing from to make meaning from this text?

(Vasquez, 2014a, p. 4)

Vasquez says that in her experience, teachers trying to engage in CL tend to treat social issues as an addition to the already existing curriculum, since these issues often are associated with un-pleasurable work or viewed as a part of non-formal schooling and therefore not really a part of the curriculum. She goes on to point out that CL does not mean merely taking a negative stance, but rather looking at an issue in different ways and from different angles, analysing it and hopefully ending up with a possible improvement on the current situation. CL is not something that can be taught in a traditional manner, but is a way of learning to recognize, analyse and try to amend injustice or inequality - any social and political issues in the community the students live in. Vasquez says that teachers need “to incorporate a critical perspective into our everyday lives with our students in order to find ways to help children understand the social and political issues around them.” (Vasquez, 2007, p. 7)

The effort to introduce a CL perspective in the everyday lives of the students may be hindered by the fact that educators of young children are often asked to “teach to the test” (Comber, 2011). Norwegian teachers and their students face several official tests throughout their school years - standardised tests in reading and mathematics from their 1st year, national tests in reading, mathematics and English at the start of their 5th, 8th and 9th year, Oslo’s tests in reading at the end of the 4th and 7th year and in the middle of the 6th year and mathematics tests at the end of the 4th and 7th year. Oslo also has natural science tests in the 4th and 7th year. In addition to this, there are the beforehand “mock tests” in order to prepare the students for the test tools used and the experience of the testing situation. The tests in the 1st and 2nd

year are in theory not mandatory - the individual school is to make the decision about whether or not their students should sit them. In practice, though, many schools decide they need the information about how well the students in those years are doing.

Teaching the skills found on the tests often take precedence over all other curricular content, a top-down ideology as Comber and Nichols state in the article “Getting the Big Picture: Regulating Knowledge in the Early Childhood Literacy Curriculum”: “the curriculum controls teachers and teachers control students” (Comber & Nichols, 2004, p. 45). An example of top-down thinking in this article is when Rose’s class is asked to use “Green Hat thinking” - in other words, use their imagination and creativity - to draw one of the five brothers, who each had a special power, from the Chinese story they have been introduced to. Rose’s creative ideas about the brother with stretchy legs who could be able to reach the clouds are completely ignored by her teacher, who merely asks her to “do more”, use colours, add more details and fill the entire sheet of paper in order to conform to the teacher’s idea of a proper drawing. In the Curriculum Inquiry article “Game on”, Vasquez says that this kills the opportunity to actually allow young learners to construct knowledge through their own experiences inside or outside of the classroom, a viewpoint many Norwegian teachers may agree with (Vasquez, 2019).

Through her long work with very young students, Vasquez has shown that they are both capable of and willing to question the world around them, react to injustice and try to do something to improve the situation, as long as it holds true meaning for them in their day-to-day lives. An example of this is that after only three months of working with her multicultural group, she already had built a curriculum creating space for dialogue and giving them a toolkit to cover the complex issues of diversity. When a new student from the Philippines began in her group, they all went searching for ways to learn more about her background and for her to present her traditions and culture to them. A trip to the school library revealed that there was absolutely no literature about the Philippines or material containing any Filipino-looking characters, and this was unfortunately also true for some of the other countries represented by children in her group. This discovery triggered a discussion and a class project. As Vasquez expressed it: “In a sense these children were learning about the notion of being “other,” of not having spaces and opportunities to belong.” (Vasquez, 2010b, p. 1). The project ended up with the students writing a letter to the school librarian, asking why there were no books about the Philippines in the library so that they could learn about their new classmate, but also so she was

able to see herself represented and be able to tell her story, and also giving the librarian a list of culturally diverse books.

Not seeing themselves or their classmates in the literature in the school library raised a complex issue that turned out to be not too complicated to address. These young students reacted to an injustice and discussed possible ways to act. The group did some further research and finally reacted by writing a letter to the school librarian in order to rectify the problem - all because it was a problem that directly affected their daily lives.

Another complex issue her class experienced was on the occasion when they were told by Anthony, another class member and only four years old, that he was a vegetarian. However, the upcoming school barbecue had no vegetarian options, so he was unable to participate on equal terms as his classmates. The group had already held discussions on issues of unfairness and injustice, like how multinational companies participated in destroying rainforests by buying beef from cattle raised on land that previously were rainforest areas. Among others, Stephanie, one of the class members, continued the conversation at home and was supported by her family in her views.

A group continued the discussion when they were back at school, decided on to try to rectify the problem by co-dictating a letter to the vice principal as one of the organisers of the barbecue, asking that vegetarian options should be included in the menu offering. They then sent another reminder when the first letter brought no response. The group even sent a questionnaire to other schools, asking whether they had any vegetarians at their schools and, if they did, whether vegetarian options were available on their menu.

Vegetarians not being heard was a representation of marginalisation and once Anthony suggested not eating at the barbecue, both he and his peers demonstrated social action. This illustrates how, through discussion, these young children were able to raise compound issues of social injustice and equity, constructing literacies from their own personal experiences and discussions and negotiations among each other.

“...in order to be critical; one must lead a critically literate life. I believe that it was framing our living, as a class, through critical literacy that allowed us to recognize Anthony’s positioning as an issue that we were able to take up as curriculum and that we were able to use to affect change.” (Vasquez, 1999, p. 247)

Through her work of making space for early childhood concerns in the classroom, Vasquez has shown that even young children are able to reflect and act on perceived inequality. These are examples of representations of social and political issues (ethnicity and lifestyles) that unfold in the community they lived in. How well the chosen textbooks represent these issues will be discussed in the Findings and discussion chapter.

In her third year-long study, she introduced an audit trail - “a public display of artefacts” intended to document the students’ learning, inspired by a behind-the-scenes video about a long-term project from a school in Italy. Her students called it “The Learning Wall” - a place where visual mementos of the things they had discussed or explored during the year were displayed - at the end of the year the wall held a hundred different items. This included copies of book covers, drawings, transcripts of conversations in the class, photographs, flyers, quotes and things like a McDonald’s Happy Meal plastic bag and the receipt. The audit trail was visible from anywhere in the classroom, and became the central object in the room to the point that the students brought visitors directly to the audit trail in order to explain what they were doing and what they had learnt (Vasquez, 1999, 2019).

Vasquez’ approach is using a CL model - not as bits and fragments stuck to other already existing curricula, but as a way of viewing and actively questioning the world around you. CL must be lived, taking the opportunities to discuss, re-design and take action when the children bring up some concern based on their own, personal experiences, inside or outside the classroom. An effective lesson is when the students engage themselves in a subject to the point where discussion continues afterwards - at home over the dinner table or even the next day at school.

Janks says in her book *Literacy and Power* that texts are designed to convey particular meanings in particular ways: they are *positioned* by the author’s point of view, with any bias that they may include. (Janks, 2009, p. 61). Any text is a view of reality from the author's perspective. The author's choice of views, linguistic choices and illustrations are efforts to persuade - to position - the reader. Janks uses this metaphor of positioning to illustrate how texts entice us into *their* way of seeing and understanding the world: *their* version of reality. A text may have several authors - editor, journalist, cartoonist, as Janks points out when analysing the article “Egg and Sperm Race - Who’s the Runner?”, the different authors involved may describe different and even conflicting realities. In this article, the headline suggests that there is a runner, while the article itself suggests that it may not even be a race involved - and the

accompanying cartoon portrays an aggressive, active egg hunting for sperm. They tell different stories to the point that they appear to come from different discourses.

Janks speaks of discourses as “locations”, places we “inhabit” (Janks, 2009, p. 71). A discourse is composed of distinctive ways of using language, but also how to act and think in a given setting, along with beliefs and values. One would expect someone in the same discourse to have similar beliefs and values, and to act similarly. A person may be in several discourses, depending on the situation: the same individual, teaching a mathematics class at school, discussing fantasy films and novels with fellow fantasy fans or attending a local football match will behave differently. It is the same person, but the aspects of the persona are different: language, clothing, behaviour, what one chooses to ignore or embrace about those around oneself.

Discourses in society change over time, as Janks also shows in her analysis of the South African Standard Bank brochure promoting the bank’s 1994 “Domestic Promise Plan” that sought to persuade employers to buy their domestic workers this new insurance policy. In this year, democratic elections were held for the first time in South Africa, and the text in the brochure is connected to the situation in the post-apartheid country. However, the choice of words and the accompanying illustration echoes a colonial discourse: the only nameless person is the depicted woman - even the baby she is caring for has a name. She is portrayed as insecure and emotional, not capable of making her own decisions, but rather someone who must let others make those important decisions for her. “It’s all been taken care of”, her employer tells her. End of story: nothing to worry about. There are still patterns remaining from the old Boer era, where white people saw themselves as the responsible adults compared to the immature natives. The text writers certainly did not consciously attempt to introduce apartheid ideas in the brochure; that would have been counter-productive in a new, democratic South Africa. The thought patterns of old nevertheless sneaked into their written text. Trying to make an active and conscious transition from an old, discouraged discourse to a newer and more modern one may indeed prove difficult, even more so in vocal conversations where there is no option to re-read and edit, but even in pre-planned, written and proofread texts there may be pitfalls. If any of the authors involved in a piece of text - the original author, the proofreader, the editor and anyone else involved in the writing process - all have a background in the same discourse they now try to avoid, they will tend to have a blind spot. In the same manner, well-meaning and liberal men, trying their best to adapt and conform to the new idea of gender

equality (when the ideas of feminism ceased to be radical and became more accepted) almost certainly had several foot-in-the-mouth-moments while doing so, slipping back to old patriarchal idioms and expressions from the days of their youth without realising that it really is not appropriate in this day and age, because the world around them has changed (Janks, 2009, pp. 65-71).

As Janks also points out (Janks, 2009, pp. 65-66), Freire used the word *men* in his writings in the 70s as a term meaning humans: *both* men and women. Today, that may be read as sexist - but at the time, feminists had not yet succeeded in challenging the linguistic concept of “man” meaning both “man” *and* “woman”. Freire’s use of the word does not necessarily mark him as a male chauvinist, because the linguistic distinction had yet to be made.

Any text should be read taking its historical and social context and any discourse its author comes from into consideration whenever possible. The reader should also be aware of from which discourses it is read: What do I know of this author? Have I read anything else I agree or disagree with? Who appears more knowledgeable on the subject? Are we aligned politically and socially or on opposite sides of the fence? Does religion make a difference? Skin colour? Gender or sexual orientation? Culture? Time?

To be aware of which discourse a text may come from, and from which discourse you are reading it, is an important aspect of CL, and should be brought up whenever a space for CL in the classroom is available. In order to find suitable spaces for CL in the classroom and build a CL curriculum, Vasquez suggests a number of key principles, inspired by her own work and that of other researchers in this field (Vasquez, 2014a, p. 4).

The CL view is a critical perspective or a lens, a point of view that the teacher should apply to her life, both in the world outside the classroom and to the learning activities in the classroom. When teaching and learning, a teacher should be on the lookout for possible spaces for CL questions that occupy the students and the community they live in. To create those spaces, the teacher must take an active interest in her pupils both in and outside the classroom. Is this a good day for one particular student? What makes them happy or sad? What interests them at school or in their spare time? Four year old Hannah’s drawings of “boy traps” opened up the space for discussions in her class about the boys teasing the girls, and eventually that all students should have equal access to the monkey bars. The students also found new ways of playing together (Vasquez, 2014b).

Bringing topics “closer to home” - in students’ familiar surroundings and background, utilising their existing competences and prior knowledge, their questions, thoughts and worries, will further learning. Disregarding this will affect their learning in a negative manner, especially if the teacher’s actual focus on the students’ work differs from the proposed focus of the task (Comber & Nichols, 2004, pp. 52-60).

The world itself may be seen as a socially constructed text, so it can be read, and like all texts it’s never neutral. As Janks phrases it (Janks, 2009, p. 61), texts are positioned by their author, and try to shift our position closer to the views of the author, whether to bring about change or uphold the existing power. In the same manner, our reading of a text depends on our perspective and views, so it is not neutral, and the things we regard as true are also affected by our various discourses: the way we think, are, believe, act and view the world.

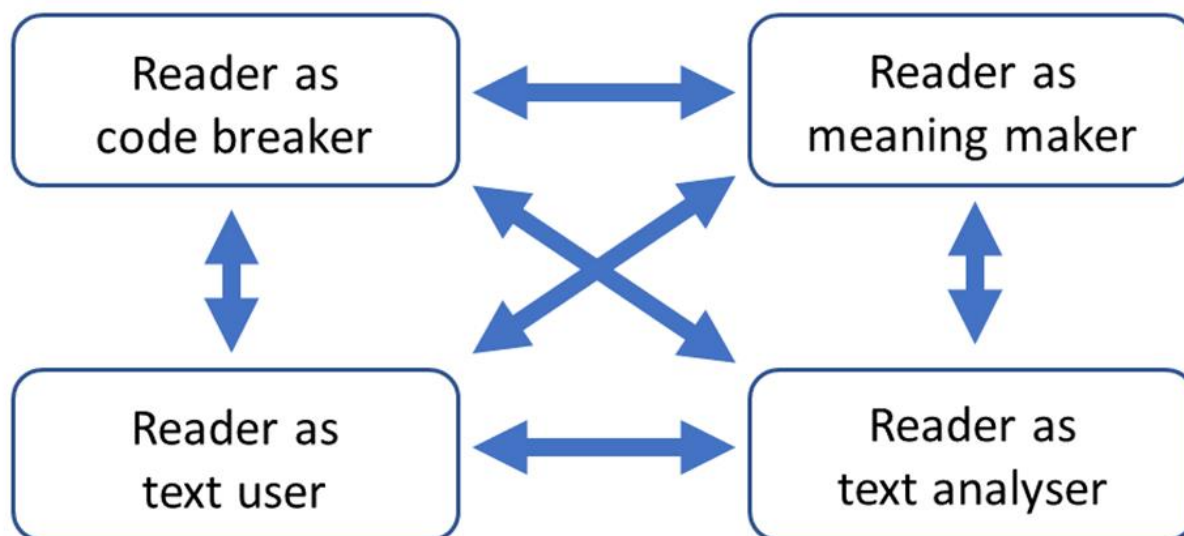
## 1.5: Critical Literacy models

When trying to raise the CL competences with young children, allowing them to “read the world” as Freire put it - that when one reads the words one is actually reading different interpretations of the world, there is no single, universal approach. Vasquez, Janks & Comber says that “as a framework for doing literacy work, “critical literacy” should look, feel, and sound different in different contexts” (Vasquez, Janks & Comber, 2019, p. 300). Comber & Nixon states that “...*critical literacy pedagogy will look different for different groups of children in different locations.*” (Comber & Nixon, 2004, p. 118). A framework or a set of CL-supporting categories of some kind is nevertheless needed when analysing various English textbooks. An overview of three different CL models - Luke & Freebody’s Four resources model, Green’s 3D model and Janks’ Interdependent model will be presented.

### Luke & Freebody’s Four Resources model

Vasquez pledges to the Four Resources model, referencing the model on several occasions in her writings from her doctoral dissertation and onwards (Vasquez, 1999, 2014a, 2019). She writes that she utilised Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources model in order to review and analyse her own research projects.





*Fig. 1: Luke & Freebody's Four Resources model*

In CL terms, a text is any form of meaning-bearing construction: text, spoken words, audio files, videos, photographs, cartoons or graphs. The term “reader” must therefore in CL be understood as someone who attempts to extract the meaning from this message.

The Four Resources model describes literacy as a collection of activities that are divided into four interdependent categories, where none is enough on its own to achieve CL competence - the reader must have competence in all four resource categories: Reader as a code breaker, reader as a meaning maker, reader as a text user and reader as a text analyser. (Vasquez, 1999, pp. 329-334.)

As a code breaker, the reader finds out how the text works - finding the patterns and being able to decode sounds and letters in words. The code-breaking reader recognizes the correct spelling of words and the conventions of a text, and utilises the building blocks of language: phonemes, morphology and whole word recognition. When interpreting other forms of texts, similar strategies are applied by the code breaker.

The reader as a meaning maker is able to understand and create texts that make sense given the available knowledge and experiences of the reader. The meaning maker possesses comprehension and vocabulary acquisition skills.

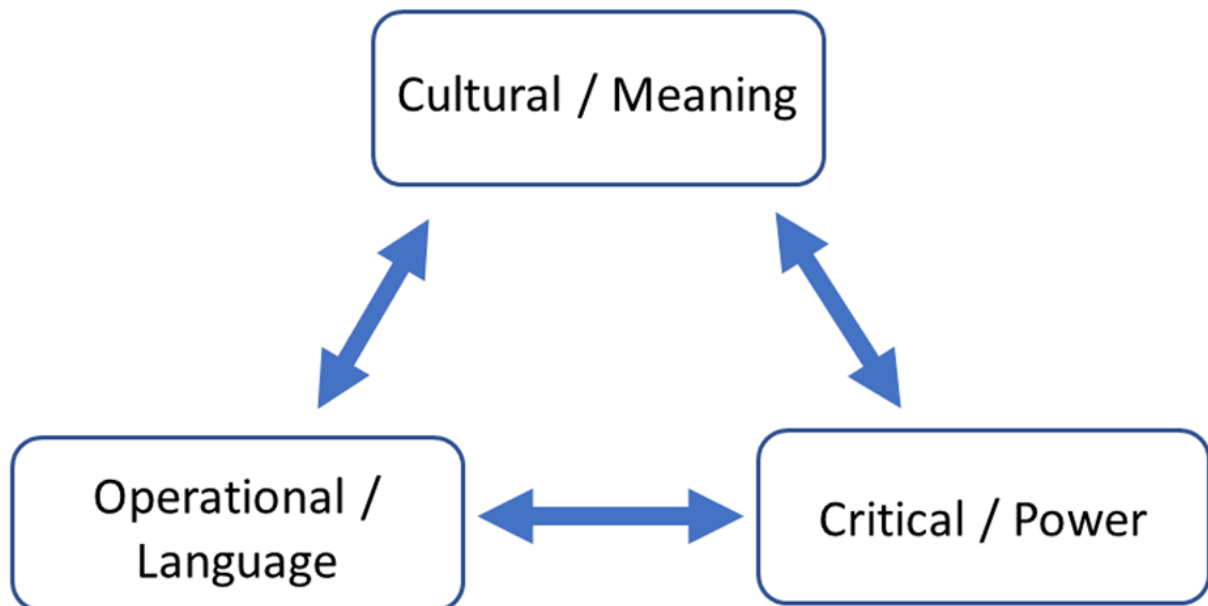
A reader as a text user is able to understand the purpose and intended audience of the text. The text user knows that texts should be structured and shaped according to the functions they are

intended to perform: who it is meant for, or who is to read it. The text user understands different genres and how to respond to them.

Reading through a critical lens, the reader as a text analyser understands that texts are not neutral, that they are positioned by the author and that the text is attempting to position the reader. The text analyser knows that texts represent views and perspectives where some of these interpretations may have messages, intended or otherwise, that are powerful or less powerful - and that texts after critique may be re-written or redesigned.

The focus in Luke & Freebody's model is on the reader and the reader's activities and the processes involved in decoding and understanding the text. When applied to Norwegian students reading English texts, the reader as text analyser dimension may benefit from the students' prior CL experiences in Norwegian, even though the reader as meaning maker dimension may be hindered by a restricted English vocabulary.

### Green's 3D model



*Fig 2: Green's 3D model*

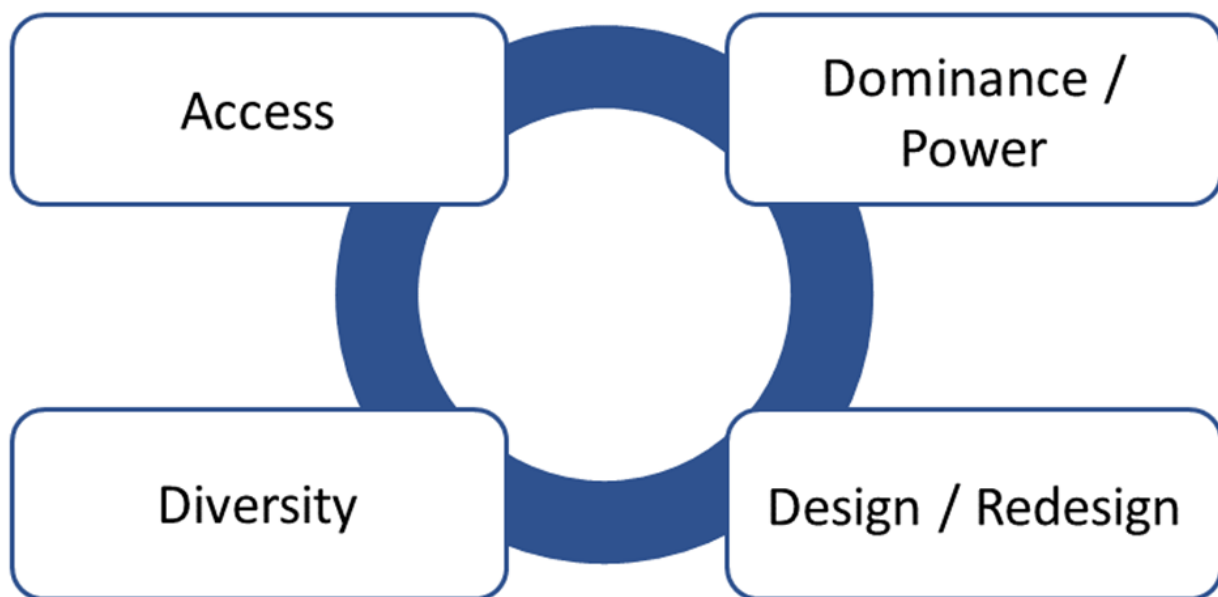
An alternative model is Green's 3D model, with its origins from ICT-based literacy training. In this model, the three dimensions described are the operational, cultural and critical dimensions, all mutually interdependent and interlocked (Scull et al, 2013, p. 39). The operational, or language, dimension is about the reader being able to read and write, decode and code. This

includes anything from being able to recognize the individual letters and knowing the alphabet, knowing about reading direction and spacing to being effective and fluent users of the language and its nuances. The cultural, or meaning, dimension is about the reader being able to read or write in context, not only from own personal knowledge and experience, but also in a social or historical context. The cultural dimension is also about being able to recognize and use different genres. The critical, or power, dimension is about the reader knowing that all texts are constructed, and thus not neutral. The critical reader is aware of the fact that the author has created the text with a particular view, and that the author has constructed it to have maximum effect. The critical dimension requires the reader to try to recognize any bias or hidden assumptions in the text, read it from different viewpoints and think about alternative ways of telling the story.

The reader and the processes of reading, interpreting and writing is central in both Luke and Freebody's model and Green's 3D model. As with the Four dimensions model, CL experience in the student's first language will be beneficial, even when the student's English language skills are limited in comparison.

The third model presented here is Janks' interdependent model.

#### Janks' Interdependent model



*Fig. 3: Janks' interdependent model*

Janks has used her CL model, also known as synthesis or interdependent model, when analysing printed texts ranging from water bottles to advertisements. Thus, the model should also be usable when analysing the qualities of texts in textbooks (Janks, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2014). Her model is based on four aspects: dominance or power, access, diversity and design/redesign, which, according to her, are mutually interdependent.

The dominance or power aspect focuses on who holds the power, which discourses are dominant, and how those in power use language to maintain their dominance. In analysing texts in textbooks, this could involve looking at the situations presented and omitted: who is represented and who is not.

Access is about having access to and being able to use the dominant discourses. Without having access to the powerful discourses, one remains powerless at the fringes of society. At the same time, in giving students access to the school discourses and the language of power and authority, there is also a risk of maintaining or even strengthening the dominance of those discourses.

The school system is in itself a manifestation/extension of the dominant powers in the society, since the contents of the curricula are defined by the authorities, and so are textbooks and their authors and publishers by extension. The very idea of an education system is to give the students access to the school discourses and the language used by authorities and power structures in order to keep the grasp on power and possibly to steer the course of society in one direction or the other. It therefore has to be assumed that students are exposed to both power/dominance and access (to various degrees, depending on ability, interests and the quality of the education system) at school. If students are to be successful in the educational system (“playing the school game”) and in the society they need access to the power language used by authorities. This makes it possible for them to be heard and understood so that their ideas and arguments are taken seriously. At the same time, they should not be blind to the fact that the power structures exist, but learn to realise that they do exist, learn to explore and challenge the dominant structures and decide whether there is any form of injustice in the society they should be trying to change. According to Janks, having access without realising that power structures exist serves to cement those very power structures. This, in itself, is a strong argument for adopting CL activities, ideas and modes of thought in the classroom.

It probably has to be accepted that not every student will understand the school discourses and adapt equally well to them - some will struggle with the basics, some will excel beyond expectations, but nevertheless, making as much of this access available as possible to each of their students is the foundation of education and what schools and teachers should strive for.

If we then may take for granted that power/dominance will be present in the education system, and the aim is to give students the required levels of access in order to analyse and then accept, reject or try to change dominant discourses, the remaining two aspects in Janks' model, diversity and design/redesign, becomes even more important.

Diversity is about allowing the presence of alternative, different viewpoints and perspectives that challenge the dominant discourses. Domination without diversity removes any tears in the fabric of society that may spark an idea of change. Everything is then going according to the authorities' plan. In the same manner, access without design/redesign does not change the dominant structures and does not even question any change. Similarly, having access without recognising diversity ignores that everyone has different identities - they do not come from the same background or share the same history, and their paths to access as a consequence may be different. Diversity without having the required access would result in inability to change the existing structures, rendering each sub-culture isolated. Diversity without domination should not be a consideration in a functional education system, as it would render every opinion and discourse on equal terms. As a consequence, there would be no "true" or "false" - bordering on "alternative facts" territory. Do the texts in the textbooks present a varied, representative and multicultural version of the world or stereotypes? Design and re-design is about changing a text in order to make it more agreeable and make it reflect the reader's view of the world. Do the follow-up tasks in the textbooks suggest any re-design or ask for the students' own personal views and thoughts, or is the focus mainly on comprehension-type questions, vocabulary and translation?

Any of the four aspects on its own without the other three creates an imbalance: Domination without access merely maintains status quo, and an attempt to redesign a text without proper access may result in a redesign without any real impact or influence. In other words, without having access to the correct discourse and language, the reader will not be able to understand the text, challenge it or rewrite it. A student meeting school with only the primary discourse - language, beliefs, feelings, values and prior knowledge - will not understand or be able to use the secondary school discourse and the meta-language and metacognition required to facilitate

deeper learning and understanding. The two students referenced in Penne & Skarstein (2015, pp. 11-13), Frederic and Jon, are a good example of how a difference in access affects the ability to understand and interpret a text. They have both read Holberg's story Niels Klim, but have totally different understandings of the text, as their descriptions of the story show. Frederic views all Norwegian classes and, by association any Norwegian texts, as boring, and lacks the meta-language and understanding of genre and historical context Jon displays: two different discourses. Jon has learned how to "play the school game" and has the required access to analyse and understand the text, which again was originally written as satire to challenge the dominant views about gender roles at the time. Frederic just describes the story as "weird" because it is so different from his world view and he doesn't understand the satire aspect. He remains in the status quo.

In Green's 3D model, the dimensions that separate Frederic's and Jon's understanding of Niels Klim would be both the Cultural/historical and the Critical/power dimension. The Cultural/historical dimension involves the ability to understand and evaluate the text in its cultural and historical context. The Critical/power dimension involves the reader being aware that texts have an agenda. Jon knows that Niels Klim was a satire story, written to challenge the gender roles in Holberg's time. Frederic is approaching the story solely from the Operational/language dimension.

Design without diversity will result in dominant views being upheld, since the lack of diversity means that no options are considered. No alternative views that might result in change are on offer. Looking back at the example from Comber & Nichols (2004), where students during Asian school week were asked to make an illustration to the story of the five Chinese brothers and use their imagination, the teacher basically ignores the students' creativity and focuses on her own concept of "a proper drawing" - asking them to use the entire sheet and avoid any white areas (Comber & Nichols, 2004, pp. 50-58). Instead of focusing on the diversity present in their drawings and asking the students to explore their original idea further as the task originally was, using their fantasy and creativity, she removes the diversity and tries to bring the end product closer to her own, dominant view of what it should look like.

The various models approach CL with a few differences when it comes to organisation, but contains the same basic concepts; texts are not neutral, interpretation of message portrayed in the text, different readers' perspectives, redesign etc, and the common denominator is that all the focus areas, whether Luke and Freebody's concept of four resources, Green's three

dimensions or Janks' quartet of aspects: domination, access, diversity and design, are mutually interdependent and must happen simultaneously to develop CL in education. The models define requirements and CL processes, explain what the teacher must take into account when planning for CL activities in the classroom, and what the established CL reader does when approaching a text.

Of the three models, both Luke & Freebody's Four Resources model and Green's 3D model have the main focus on the internal processes involved in reading and interpreting. Janks' model focuses on analysing different aspects of the text itself, and therefore, as she herself has shown, lends itself more easily to analysing existing texts like the texts found in English textbooks. The categories used for analysis which are presented in the next chapter will borrow aspects from Janks' Diversity, Dominance and Design/Redesign dimensions, but also from Luke & Freebody's Reader as text analyser dimension and Green's Cultural & Critical dimensions, as the CL-aware reader knows that no text is wholly neutral and may be read differently depending on the reader's position and previous knowledge, views and experience.

## 1.6: Critical Literacy in a foreign language

The principles of CL are the same no matter which language is used, but in order to understand, evaluate and challenge a text, a certain basic level of language competence must be present - to be able to "read between the lines". Norwegian students use and acquire English on a daily basis, both in the classroom and in their spare time: English classes, the internet, TV shows and movies, music, gaming, social media, but are Norwegian 5th-7th grade students proficient enough in English to handle CL when reading English texts? Higher education in Norway requires a high degree of English skills, as most papers and articles are published in English. Primary school students also find they have access to more learning materials in English when working with projects, compared to just Norwegian. Norwegian students have their first English lessons in their first year at school (and counting and singing English songs and rhymes in kindergarten), whereas other foreign languages are taught from 8th grade.

When a country, like Norway, chooses to introduce English in its national curriculum as early as year 1 in primary school, the intended outcome after finalising their education should be to attain a level of proficiency that is needed for the country's citizens to engage with others, and also benefit from the access to the rest of the world. The ideal outcome should be students with the language skills needed to communicate local interests, local history, local events, myths,

legends and other folklore, and all the other aspects of life one would naturally say or think in one's native language. In other words, students with the language skills that enable them to apply the principles of CL in both English and Norwegian. As stated earlier, the amount of English the students encounter in their daily life outside school, as English is a global language, also makes CL ability important.

The English language has played an important role in communication around the globe for a long time. From the time of British colonialism and the industrial revolution in the 18th century, to the power of the American economic and cultural hegemony in the 20th century, bringing with it popular songs, advertising, radio and television, and the internet which started entirely in English.

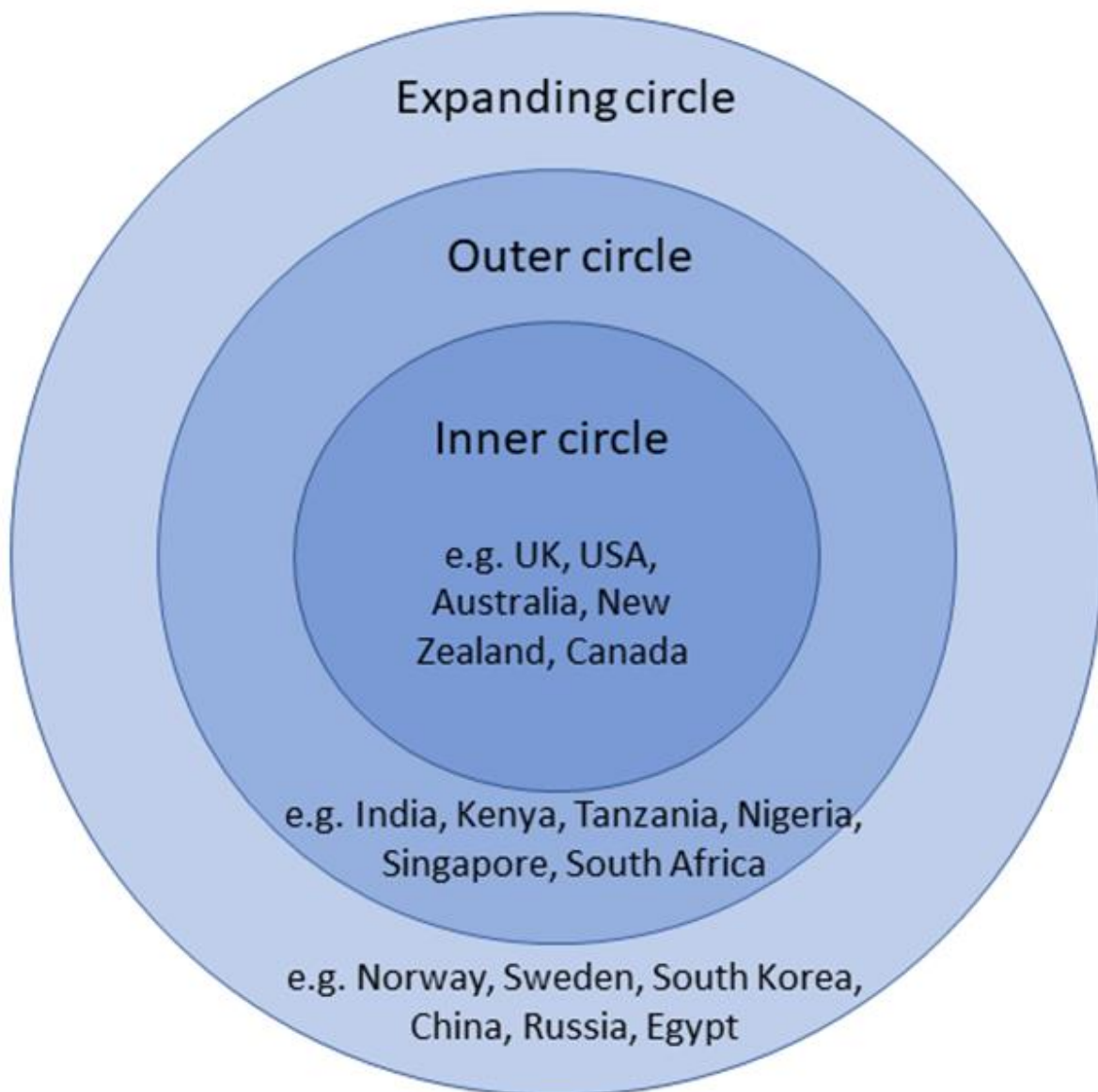
English is often perceived as a single, global language; however, well-known linguists Braj Kachru and David Crystal uses the word in plural: *Englishes*, a closely related language family that nevertheless differ in multiple ways: intonation, accent, pronunciation and vocabulary, rather than a single language (Crystal, 2012).

In Braj Kachru's three-circle model, the Inner circle, countries where English is the native language of most people, one will find not only British English, but also American English, Australian English etc., each evolving in a slightly different direction from their common origin.

In its travels around the globe, English has adopted not only tone, accents and intonation, but parts of the local vocabulary where it is spoken, so new varieties of English are born. This local adaptation of English has been going on globally, and in places like India, Nigeria, South Africa, Singapore and many others, their use of a localised variant of English reflects their own cultural identity. The English expression "A little learning is a dangerous thing" is in Nigerian English more directly expressed as "Little education is dangerous". Indian students, stressed by the teacher, may use an expression directly translated from Hindi: "My teacher is sitting on my head", but they still want to "pass out of college". These countries represent what Kachru calls the Outer circle, where English is not a native tongue, but adopted as an official or semi-official language, either through a colonial past or as a lingua franca where a country has several native languages. In short, today there is no singular, "correct" form of English to be taught or spoken. The variant most often taught in the classroom has traditionally been British English, but the media-driven American English has a powerful influence as well.



Kachru's third circle is the Expanding circle, where English has no official role, but nevertheless is taught in schools and used for international communication. Norway, then, traditionally belonged to this circle, but it could be argued that Norway is moving towards the Outer circle. English is a world language, and since so many use English across the globe, the ability to apply principles of CL becomes important not only in one's first language, but in English as well. To do this effectively, one should be aware of the fact that the meaning of words and expressions may differ between variants of Englishes, even between Inner circle countries. It will be interesting to see if any of the textbooks show examples of this.



*Fig. 4: Kachru's three circles of World English*

Regardless of where Norway belongs today, in the Outer or in the Expanding circle, it is certainly safe to state that the Norwegian curricula places English on a different level of importance compared to other foreign languages taught in Norwegian schools. Not only is English introduced in year 1, but there is a definite high standard of proficiency in the English subject, expecting Norwegian learners to have a high competence in the use of the language, giving it a higher status with its own curriculum and position as a first second language, compared to the other foreign languages taught in school, like Spanish, French and German. In the Official Norwegian Report 28 (2015-2016), the Department for Education and Research suggested that the current exam practice should be replaced with a system where every student after year 10 would have obligatory, written exams in three subjects - Norwegian, mathematics and English (Meld. St. 28 (2015-2016, ch. 5). In chapter 4 in the same report, six subjects are listed as common subjects in primary and secondary schools: Norwegian, English, mathematics, science, social studies and physical education, and, apart from physical education, those subjects are included in the basis for general study competence.

In the new curriculum, English as a subject has its own curriculum, and the other foreign languages share another - French, German, Spanish being the mainstream, but offered from year 8 onwards. They both begin with a *Relevance and central values* chapter despite having separate learning paragraphs, but they distinctly say that multilingualism is a resource both in school and elsewhere in society and to communicate with other people worldwide as a result of globalisation. English as a subject is a tool for developing communicative and linguistic skills where cultural insights promote interaction, understanding and respect between people with different cultural backgrounds, contributing to stronger democratic commitment and citizenship. Justifiably, it is written that knowledge of foreign languages is an opportunity to participate in globalisation, but it explicitly highlights that having knowledge of English widens the access to education, work and personal development as most resources are increasingly available in both professional, leisure and educational contexts in English.

The LK-20 English curriculum states in *Relevance and central values*: “Through working with the subject the pupils shall become confident users of English so that they can use English to learn, communicate and connect with others” (Udir, 2020b). The foreign language curriculum does not mention confidence, nor using the language to learn, which suggests that the expected language competence in English is higher than for other languages.

We find other examples that highlight this difference in the LK-20 curriculum in *Basic Skills*:

“Reading in English means understanding and reflecting on the content of various types of texts on paper and on screen, and contributing to reading pleasure and language acquisition” (Udir, 2020b). Compare this to *Basic skills* in the foreign language curriculum: “To be able to read in a foreign language means to understand the contents of different types of text, both on paper and digitally” (Udir, 2020c, my translation).

Similarly, on writing, the English curriculum states: “Writing in English means being able to express ideas and opinions in an understandable and appropriate manner in various types of texts, both on paper and on screen” whereas the foreign language curriculum is less specific: “To be able to write in a foreign language means to create different types of text that communicates a content” (Udir, 2020c, my translation).

In short, if the English curriculum aims are at least partially fulfilled, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Norwegian upper primary students should have sufficient English skills to be able to perform CL activities in English.

Vasquez has already shown that 3-5-year olds are able to apply CL principles in English, and a recent study from Korea, doing literary sessions with 20 5-year-olds confirms her findings, using parody fairy tales, enabling students to reinterpret and reconstruct the stories with critical and logical thinking skills, challenging stereotypes, confronting the dominant social norms, retaliating to traditional conceptions and developing attitudes of gender equality and viewing the traditional fairytales from multiple perspectives - higher-level thinking, showing CL in all its forms (Wee et al., 2019). Additionally, 18-year-old Chinese students with only 5 years of English studies were able to understand and use those principles in English, although with variable results - but their critical reading performance in Chinese varied as well, so a second language had less to do with it than getting to grips with the actual concept. This shows not only that it is possible to work with CL in a foreign language after just a few years of language acquisition (Macknish, 2011), but that very young learners are able to grasp the concepts of CL and apply them to aspects of their everyday life. “We found that even very young children were able to identify books which positioned them as ignorant, or offered limited options for how to be a boy or a girl, a mother or a father, or represented the young and the old, the rich and the poor in particular ways” (Comber, 2007). Thus, Norwegian 5th-7th grade students, provided that they already are familiar with CL work in Norwegian, and with several years of English experience at school and at home, should be able to perform CL activities in English, if not to the same standard as when speaking Norwegian.

If learning and developing CL skills is important in the students' mother tongue, it should be equally important that they learn to apply those skills in another language they encounter in their daily life: English - and they should have the English skills required to do so. They need support from their teacher and access to suitable texts, which is why this study intends to explore the questions asked earlier, how well, and in what way, do current English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools support the development of CL skills?

## 1.7: English textbooks and Critical Literacy

Textbooks have a long history of being an authority, a view held by teachers, parents and students alike - something containing truths to be read, understood and replicated to the best of the student's ability, and the best answer is the answer the teacher expects, which is the one matching the textbook. Students are quick to grasp what their teacher regards a "correct" or "acceptable" answer, trying to fit into the current, dominant school discourse. This mindset leaves little room for the students' individual creativity and curiosity, and thus for finding the CL spaces.

Traditionally, teaching a language was about the student becoming a proficient user in reading and writing, understanding the individual words and their meaning, eventually extracting the surface message inherent in the provided text. This involves becoming familiar with the formal rules of the language, gaining a vocabulary, learning correct pronunciation and grammar. Educators tell the students what to do, and the students receive the instructions and do it the correct and approved way - but the underlying contents of the text is still not addressed or interpreted: in effect, it is basically a reproduction of the current dominant discourses and keeping the world the way it is.

As Hinkel wrote: "In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, second language (L2) teaching and learning were largely seen as having to do with the formal properties of language, such as grammar, lexicon, and pronunciation" (Hinkel, 2005, p. 891). In other words, the focus was on acquiring the skills to recognise the different structures or patterns in a text, and how words come together to form a sentence, and deciphering the surface message of the text.

These traditional ways of teaching are obvious obstacles to learning to read according to the principles of CL. The teacher seeking to teach CL principles to her students could of course add other texts with opposing views to the curriculum, but the textbook would still be in the default

position of authority. One answer might be a textbook that presents several different - even conflicting - views on the same topic, thus both signifying that there is more than one way to describe a topic, and inviting the class to a discussion and possibly a re-read or re-write process. An example is the young Korean children's own alternative versions of Cinderella and Snow White after hearing parodies of the fairytales in "*Cinderella did not speak up*", identifying and challenging the traditional fairytale stereotypes (Wee et al, 2019).

The CL questions, like "What is this text trying to do to me?" (Vasquez, 2014a, p.4) requires such things as questioning the author's motives and considering from which background one is reading and interpreting the text. Texts always carry a meaning, but meaning can - and will - change with subsequent readings, even when read by the same reader over again for a whole range of reasons, and another reader might interpret the text in an entirely different manner, due to differences in prior knowledge, opinions and knowledge of the language. If CL principles are to be followed, any texts produced or read/re-written by the students should have a real-life purpose, preferably with a real addressee beyond the four walls of the classroom.

As stated earlier, there are no specific CL texts - all texts may be read critically (Vasquez, 2014a, p.4). Nevertheless, in English classes, the English textbook is a central element, and as Vasquez puts it: "... because books ... dominate the classroom, teachers are more used to working with those texts ..." (Vasquez, 2010b, p. 9). The texts included should support CL activities: offering opposing views or conflicting versions of the same story, or texts about everyday concerns or conflict (Vasquez, 2014a, p. 5), illustrations that have a different angle to the main story (Janks, 2009, p. 64), exercises inviting to re-writing or re-telling, and at the same time enhancing the students' English skills and tell fun or interesting stories.

Many students today live active social lives on the Internet - gaming, chats, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram and a myriad of other platforms, leaving a platform whenever the "grown-ups" embrace it. They communicate both in Norwegian and in English as they have contact with youth from other parts of the globe. They are convinced that they are learning much of their English outside of the classroom (Thorsen, 2008, p.2). The English they encounter this way may differ from the "standard" British Received Pronunciation English taught at school, but they nevertheless communicate effectively with others with similar interests. The student who is actively exploring the language, trying and accepting the risk of failing, will undoubtedly become a more fluent user than one not uttering a single sentence before it is "correct". The English they acquire and use in these circumstances may be a

specialist subset of English, defined by the topic they converse about with like-minded youths across the world. They may recognise and use abbreviations and slang terms, interpret literal word-by-word translations borrowed from another language, and will read both misleading and correct statements and other people's ways of viewing the world. The CL ability to analyse, evaluate and criticise becomes very important in this context, and the conscious CL exercises and discussions must be developed to the point that it becomes ingrained in their way of reacting to any text they encounter.

The Internet-savvy youngsters are rapidly becoming experts in communicating in English, at least according to themselves. The teacher - and the textbook - faces a problem here, because this does not apply to all students in the class. Even in this day and age, not every student has access to the Internet at home, and even if they have, computer time may have to be shared with their siblings, as not every family has one piece of Internet-connected bit of hardware for each family member. Both the textbook and the teacher have to connect with those without experience of using English outside of the classroom, and those students who live and breathe English in their spare time. This could point to a future when physical copies of textbooks actually printed on paper is a thing of the past, and the textbook goes all digital in order to accommodate a broad range of topics with different versions of the same text.

If the texts in a textbook do not interest or challenge, the learning outcome will not be the same as if they do draw the students' attention. As stated earlier, older textbooks often brought the students to typical Inner circle countries. Once, this was an effective strategy - to introduce the students to new places and sights. Today, television and the Internet allows them to virtually visit almost everywhere in a manner a paper textbook never will be able to.

The topics popular today may be considered outdated before the next revision of a textbook. The "classic" texts are classics because they have managed to stay relevant for generations because they refer to some timeless and essentially important aspect of being human.

What also will be relevant for Norwegian students is how Norway - and they themselves - are being represented by the textbooks. As English has such a presence in Norway, our students should be able to present Norway to English-speaking visitors. References to Norway and anything Norwegian should be present. This will be a part of the study.

The everyday connection might be challenging. One thing is the obvious difficulty in finding everyday concerns that would be valid for all users of the textbook, as students live their lives

under different circumstances and experience different challenges. Even if a text could be found that represents a real everyday concern for most students, the author of a textbook possibly faces a different problem: risking co-opting the students' interests. This could be a reason why even though students claim they learn much of their English outside of the classroom (Eivind H. Thorsen, 2008, p. 2), as soon as the activities are brought into the classroom, it's not cool anymore. CL research has shown that a question or a statement about a frustration, made in-class, can become a space for learning - about oneself, the current or other subjects or about the world - but Vasquez made it absolutely clear that the initiative must come from the students: "Co-opting their interests refers to taking over such things as popular culture texts about which the children are passionate and turning them into school curriculum thereby making those texts less desirable" (Vasquez, 2004, pp. 79-80).

This raises some questions about the contents of textbooks. Texts should be connecting with the students' daily lives and their interests, but the texts should not co-opt their out-of-school cultural interests. This is seemingly a dilemma, as the two requirements are conflicting. In addition, textbooks tend to stay in circulation for some years. The "hip" thing when the textbook was written and sent to print may be totally outdated two to three years later. Generic, more timeless texts along the lines of "My hobby", presented by four or five characters describing football, fishing, gaming and hiking might prove to be a safer option for publishers, as the case has been up to now in many English textbooks. Textbooks should be flexible and varied - offering individual students the option of texts and follow-up activities that match their interests and views. This, in turn, would suggest a textbook with more texts than strictly necessary, and the entire textbook should then not be viewed as compulsory reading.

Vasquez has also shown through her research that topics from the students' daily life outside the classroom may result in engagement and learning, as long as she found the spaces opened up by her students' comments and discussions. Teachers that want to keep their jobs cannot just walk into their classroom and hope for a remark from any of the students to save the lesson, though. There is a curriculum, there must be a plan for the lesson and the learning outcomes. Even though the curriculum allows for choices in learning materials, the content and activities in a lesson cannot be left to chance. If - or when - some heartfelt remark creates an opening for CL activity, the teacher has several possible options. She could either choose to shelve today's lesson plan, deciding that the raised issue is more important right here and now, and revisit the original lesson plan another day - but then, she would have to have some contingency plans and

thoughts about how a relevant issue could be dealt with in a CL manner. Another option is the quite classic teacher's reply: "That's a very good question, but we're not going to talk about that now, since we have other things to do." After receiving some answers along these lines, very few students bother to ask again. A third option for the teacher is to reschedule the discussion by saying that it is a very good question, and we will discuss it later - and then have a visual memento displayed in the class, so the topic stays fresh in the minds of the students until later - an audit trail, as described by Vasquez (1999, p. 131), but before the activity, not afterwards.

CL activities may also be planned, but the teacher is then faced with the challenge of engaging the students, since the initiative comes from the teacher and not sparked by a comment or a genuine question from one of her students. Comber has advocated that teachers should develop "creative and critical literacy pedagogies which involve young people in designing belonging spaces, advocating for their rights, producing community art works, researching the histories of their school community, and researching and planting sustainable gardens" (Comber, 2011). Selling a project about their own daily lives to the students may be a middle ground. Activities like producing texts about themselves and their community for other real-life readers, even in other parts of the world, can interest and engage students, making the project their own. This was shown by Janks when she worked with a teacher and her students to create a South African book of fun and games. The students knew the book they produced was to be translated to English later and sent to fellow students in Australia. "We wanted students to see themselves as knowledge makers, who could produce artifacts (a book, a video) rooted in their own lives that would be valued beyond their own local context" (Janks, 2006, as cited in Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 303). This proved an added inspirational aspect to the work - an indication that the CL idea that the texts students are asked to produce, should have a real-life purpose and a real-life intended reader outside the four walls of the classroom has merit.

CL activity, then, is also about allowing the students to be active knowledge makers and re-creators, and teachers being learners alongside the students. It should not be all-knowing teachers filling tabula rasae students in a top-down manner of teaching, but teachers and students evolving together as a joint learning project, working to empower the students, seeking to discover the underlying connections between power structures and language, filling the students with confidence that they may do something about imbalances and injustice in the community. As Comber among others have shown, teachers that have high expectations of



their students and are ambitious on their behalf tend to have higher-achieving students (Comber, 2014). Similarly, teachers that set out to learn about their students as persons beyond the classroom, their personal stories and their potential resources that are rendered invisible in the classroom, may improve the learning potential for the entire class (Kamler & Comber, 2005). A good textbook may be of significant help to this end, but the real work is done by the teacher and the students.

Additionally, the new “deep learning” focus in the new Norwegian curricula implies that students should have a larger degree of freedom when choosing which texts to read and work with. Many textbooks in various subjects already have accompanying interactive sites available on the web, and the Internet is full of available information that may facilitate deep learning. The challenge is to be able to discern between information and disinformation, and this is where CL skills will become crucial. Nevertheless, the textbook itself will be important, and should offer readers some degree of deep learning on its own. This would require not only a new, different kind of textbook, with more texts than strictly necessary, covering topics from several and even contradictory perspectives and not simply through the old two or three different levels of language richness and difficulty, but it would also require a new understanding of the role of the textbook, particularly from teachers and parents. If a textbook is to offer freedom of choice, its entire content cannot be compulsory reading. This should be apparent, both by sheer volume of texts and the range of activities and also stated explicitly - if not in the textbook itself (where the parents may see it), at the very least in the accompanying teacher’s guide.

The new LK-20 English curriculum does not require any Inner circle country references or texts, but makes special mention of the fact that English is a global language. How will this affect the new textbooks? Will there still be a majority of people and places in the UK or USA, or will texts present more of the global English aspect? Will the new textbooks help the students gain “*knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity*” or offer “*traditions of indigenous peoples*” (LK-20, English curriculum, *Core Elements*)? Will they offer texts about Norway - both today’s Norway and Norwegian traditions - or the countries our students’ families originally originated from? Whether they do or not, the teacher still has a chance to ask the students to read the texts through a CL lens: What does this text tell us about social and political issues, about the person who wrote the text, and what do you think we ought to be told that is not mentioned at all? Do you see any obvious stereotypes there? In other

words: what kind of literacies are available in textbooks, to what extent do they maintain or reinforce dominant discourses? To prevent dominant discourses suggest scrutinising texts, understanding that texts are constructed and if so, can they be reconstructed in other ways? Where do the textbooks position the students - at home or abroad, in Inner circle or Outer circle countries, as a Norwegian welcoming an English-speaking tourist, a tourist or a native speaker? What varieties of Englishes are presented?

To sum up, CL activity in the classroom may be due to the teacher seizing the moment, using a comment or a question from one or more of her students, but CL activity may also be pre-planned to a certain extent. A Vasquez-style audit trail may focus their interest, whether the space for CL activity is opened spontaneously by a student in class or pre-planned by the teacher. Besides the teacher's ability to attract the students' interest sufficiently to create a real discussion or engagement in the proposed project, this requires a selection of suitable texts that not only present both familiar and unfamiliar milieus, but also present conflicting or contrasting views that puzzle, provoke, engage or inspire further exploration and re-writing. If all those texts are readily available in the textbook, so much the better.

# Chapter 2: Method

## 2.1: Introduction

Having reviewed general CL concepts, the potential challenges of CL in a second language and the role and challenges of the textbook in a modern multimedia society, this chapter describes the choice of method, the selection of texts and the initial categories used in the analysis are listed. Finally, some thoughts are presented regarding ethics, validity and reliability.

## 2.2: The analysis method

Deciding on which method to use is important for the outcome of a study, and different research questions may need different methods in order to get the answers needed. This study investigates whether current English textbooks in Norwegian upper primary schools help promote students' CL skills. Over the years, my own teaching practice has allowed me to explore CL modes of thinking together with my students, both in Norwegian and in English, but it will be interesting to see whether the new textbooks, written to comply with the requirements in the new English curriculum, offer any CL-supporting material directly in the books. In order to find the answer, text analysis was chosen as a suitable method. Text analysis may be done in many ways, and in this study, it is appropriate to call it document analysis, as the documents in question are published textbooks, and not field notes, interview notes or questionnaire results. The three selected English textbooks are intended for the same year in the new curriculum, and the chosen chapters that cover similar themes: therefore, it may be called a horizontal study.

According to Simon Lindgren, text analysis is about bringing text and context together, and the use of language in social, historical, cultural and political context affects the meaning created (Lindgren, 2011, p. 268). It is certainly possible to count the frequency of words and phrases used in a text and analyse the denotative basic surface message, but it is still language and created meanings that are studied when gathering data for a qualitative text analysis. In real life, the content of a text is read by different readers, coming from various discourses and with various experiences, expectations and knowledge. Thus, the connotative content of the text - the interpreted text filtered through associated ideas and values - will vary from reader to reader. In practice, a text then offers many different layers of meaning, and is not a true

representation of reality. This is in accordance with general CL theory: that no text is neutral and that all texts may be read critically (Vasquez, 2014a, p.4). Quantitative methods are useful for studying the denotative contents of a text, but one gains deeper insight from using qualitative methods.

When using text analysis, interpreting the contents of the texts and finding the deeper, underlying messages and meanings, there is a risk that the researcher may highlight the findings that support the thesis, creating a large degree of subjectivity. This, in turn, may make recreating the results difficult. Therefore, it is essential that the choices made at each step are documented, and the reasons why they were made explained.

### 2.3: The selected books

Due to the limited number of available books at the time of writing, the textbooks included are *Explore 6* 2nd Edition (Gyldendal, 2021), *Engelsk 6* (Cappelen Damm, 2021) and *Quest:6* (Aschehoug, 2021). These books are also from major publishers, and will see widespread use across the country. It would have been nice to include *Link* from Fagbokforlaget, but that series is only available up to 5th grade at the time of writing. Assuming that textbooks aimed at older students present richer texts, more advanced language and more challenging tasks, the three available 6th grade books were chosen. As an analysis of all texts and tasks in the textbooks would have been too comprehensive for this study, one chapter from each book with similar topics was selected - climate and the effects of human activity on the environment.

The study assumes that the authors have chosen texts that contain language of a suitable complexity for the major part of the intended audience, and that the students in general, having started with English lessons in their first year at school, possess adequate English language skills according to their level, the expected progression according to the curriculum and their out-of-school experience with English. As the basic principles of CL would be easier to explore and understand in one's first language, in this case Norwegian for most students, it is furthermore assumed that the students already have experience with and a basic understanding of CL principles before trying to apply these principles in English. It is also assumed that the majority of students have mastered the basic principles of coding and decoding, awareness of different genres and writing with a specific purpose for an intended audience, according to their level.

In order to be able to apply CL principles, the students must already possess adequate skills as in the code breaker, text user and meaning maker dimensions according to Luke & Freebody's Four dimensions model. In Green's 3D model, this aspect is covered by the operational language abilities dimension. In Janks' Interdependent model, this would translate to the students having Access, enabling them to participate in the dominant school discourses.

The remaining dimensions are relevant for CL activity: Luke & Freebody's Reader as text analyser dimension, Green's Cultural & Critical dimensions and Janks' Diversity, Dominance and Design/Redesign dimensions - which is to say that texts should be read both in a social and a historical context, the writer and any reader of the text are not neutral, all texts are positioned by the author's beliefs, and as a result they are trying to position the reader, and texts may be redesigned or re-written to align better with the reader's view of the world. Vasquez has an example of this in "Negotiating Critical Literacies With Young Children": the students in Vasquez' class debating the warning message on McDonald's toy packaging and deciding that since the plastic bag was unsafe enough to warrant a "Keep out of reach of babies and children" warning, it should not be used for packaging toys intended for children. The students therefore decided to redesign the packaging, offering safer alternatives and one student presented his design ideas in a letter to the local McDonald's (Vasquez, 1999, pp. 276 - 282).

## 2.4: The methodological approach

Ideally, the study would have to analyse the textbooks on two different levels: The first being how the textbooks may stimulate the students to CL activity on their own without any additional input from the teacher. This might be in the form of two or more directly contradictory texts on the same topic, or a text that is so provoking that the students react and start a discussion on their own. The second level would be how the textbooks may support the teacher in her efforts to teach CL awareness to her students. As any text - or textbook - may be used by a teacher as a basis for CL activity, with or without supporting materials, this study will focus on the first level: direct CL input from the textbook itself.

In order to carry out the study, a qualitative analysis of chapters of the chosen textbooks was undertaken with a view to aspects of the major CL models. This was done from the discourse of a teacher looking for suitable materials in order to further develop her students' CL competencies.

Analysing the contents of textbooks in a qualitative manner is not a straightforward process. It is a difficult, and subjective, process. A brand new set of textbooks, never used in an actual classroom setting reads differently to a similar set of trusted, often used set of books. There is a possible bias: how to choose between the new and exciting or the old and well-known? There is always room for interpretation when analysing texts. Thus, it is important that the researcher is open about observations and reflections on every step of the process, and the decisions made at the time. Document analysis may be done in different ways: developing categories during the reading/analysis, or starting with a preliminary set of categories and adjusting them during the reading/analysis process.

The research questions in this study were:

- Do current English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools support the development of Critical Literacy skills, and if so, in what way?
- How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools position the reader?
- How is diversity represented in English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools, worldwide, in Norway and in the Norwegian classroom?
- How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools represent the various countries and communities presented in the texts?
- How do English textbooks represent the different varieties of Global Englishes?

Having these research questions in mind, a set of preliminary categories representing aspects of CL was developed, adopting what Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon (2005, s. 1281) calls a directed approach, in order to answer them. Aspects of the three CL models earlier in the theory chapter (Janks' Diversity, Dominance and Design/Redesign dimensions, Luke & Freebody's Reader as text analyser dimension and Green's Cultural & Critical dimensions) were used in developing the categories, together with general CL theory. These categories were:

A: *Contrasting views*. Does the textbook present any set of two or more conflicting or opposite views, or the same story from several perspectives?

B: *Perspective & Position*. How are the students mainly positioned by the textbook? Tourist or local, observer or participant? Are the students asked to read from another position?

C: *Diversity & Voice*. Who is presented, who is omitted? Is diversity, not only in multicultural and multiethnic terms, but also when it comes to gender, religion, ability/disability and sexual orientation (“straight”, asexual, lesbian, bisexual, gay, transsexual, queer - LBGTQ) represented? Do the textbooks represent their Norwegian readers? How are the countries and communities presented? Are samples of Global Englishes presented?

D: *Experience & Redesign*. Are the students asked to evaluate, rewrite or redesign a text? Are they asked to read from another position, or re-read after having received additional information? Are they asked to draw on their own experiences?

E: *Power and motives*. Do the textbooks suggest or show in any way that a text tries to position the reader? That there is an underlying agenda? That no text is wholly neutral, and neither is the reader?

Each category was further divided into sub-categories that were adjusted as necessary during the analysis. Examples will be shown in the Findings and discussion chapter.

Based on the results of the initial analysis, selections of each textbook were subjected to a close reading with regard to how they fared in each of the categories. The categories and sub-categories were adjusted and expanded during the reading. A sample analysis table is included in the appendix. The results will be presented, one book at the time.

## 2.5: Reflections on ethics, validity and reliability

This study does not attempt to evaluate - or rank in order of preference - the textbooks in terms of suitability for teaching English in Norwegian schools. Even though there is no longer an approval process involved, both major and minor publishers know their end product must reflect the national curriculum and be of a certain quality for schools to buy and use them. No general recommendations have been made.

This study has been an analysis of text and has not entailed the use of sensitive data from any source. No personal data has been collected. No interviews have been made, and no questionnaires have been handed out.

Validity is about whether the research design, the findings and the conclusions drawn are logically connected with the original research questions. In other words, does the study answer

the questions asked? Reliability, in quantitative studies, is whether another researcher would find the same, or similar, results from the same data. In qualitative studies, this is more difficult, as the second researcher will interpret the same set of data from her own perspective, preconceptions and prior knowledge. As this is a study of textbooks, the risk of reactivity is eliminated, as there are no respondents the researcher might affect. However, the other main threat to reliability in qualitative studies, subjectivity, cannot be ignored. The qualitative researcher is rarely entirely objective. There is an already high degree of interest in the subject, some pre-knowledge and preconceptions, when the research starts - as in this case: an English teacher with a high degree of interest in CL examining new English textbooks. This requires that the researcher must be open throughout the study - both about thoughts, reflections and the basis for the conclusions drawn, but also to modify and adapt, both own mindset and parts of the study. It is therefore important to document the process and explain the reasoning behind the decisions made - the context of the study (Tjora, 2010, p. 178).



## Chapter 3: Findings and discussion

### 3.1: Introduction

This study has so far presented general CL theory, potential challenges when doing CL activities in a second language and the reasoning behind the chosen analysis method and the textbook and chapter selection. In this chapter, three chapters from the three selected textbooks will be analysed with a view to whether or not they contribute to developing students' CL skills in any way. First, the initial impressions, followed by the findings, presented for one chapter at the time, and then the findings for all three chapters are discussed.

### 3.2: First thoughts

At first glance, it is apparent that the books, even though they are written to conform to the same English curriculum, differ significantly in various aspects of the layout, the organisation of the chapters and the themes presented, and also in the depth of detail and the extent of the various topics. This may be due to the fact that the Norwegian LK-20 English curriculum does not have a specific set of learning aims after each school year: just the expected competence aims after year 2, 4 and 7. Thus, the publishers and their authors may have different ideas about which topics to present and when to present a particular topic - 5th, 6th or 7th year. How the topic should be presented in terms of depth and breadth is also up to authors and publishers to decide. A comparison of all topics in the three books, and whether a particular set of books will enable students to reach the learning aims in the English curriculum after year 7 is beyond the scope of this thesis. In order to make the analysis manageable, one topic with a similar theme presented in all three textbooks was chosen and analysed using a preliminary set of CL-supporting categories.

All three books have a chapter about weather and climate challenges and the effects of human activities on nature: "Saving our Planet" in *Explore 6* (pp. 138-165), "Down to Earth" in *Engelsk 6* (pp. 142-193) and "Come Rain or Shine" in *Quest 6* (pp. 144-163). Due to the difference in the number of pages devoted to this topic in the different books, it is natural to assume that the books with large chapters would have a proportionally higher number of CL-related material and tasks, provided that the different authors give equal thought to CL.

In the following sections, the findings and initial impressions during the first readings are presented, one chapter from each book at a time. The findings and further interpretations linked to the research questions and CL theory of this study will be discussed afterwards in subchapter 3.6: Discussion and final thoughts.

### 3.3: *Explore 6*: My book (Gyldendal)

The structure of *Explore 6* provides an initial introduction to the organisation of the book, seven chapters, followed by a list of irregular verbs and a wordlist. Each chapter has a two-page starter spread, containing a collage of cartoons and photographs, coupled with some essential words to learn, and the basic learning aims for the chapter - the learning aims are written in Norwegian. The following pages are coded on three differentiating levels from one to three: one is intended for everyone, two is for the majority of learners, and three is for those who enjoy a challenge, according to the book's introduction. In general, the topic illustrations are actual photographs, but tasks and grammar topics are illustrated with cartoons. There is a character throughout the book, Mr X. Plore, providing help to the students. He gives helpful tips on reading, writing, grammar and suggests further activities outside the book.

#### **Findings:**

The starter spread illustration in "Saving our Planet" (pp. 138-139) does a good job of presenting contrasts and opposites. It is a collage, with an orange sky in the background. We can see an active volcano and smoking factories. In front of this we see a city with tall, modern buildings. Between the green forest with a railway bridge in the foreground and the city is a little cartoon-style drawing of blue water with plastic bottles floating in it. Amid this scene, various wild animals are presented. The illustration appears to have white paint scattered over it on the left and on the bottom, maybe suggesting that the environment is under threat and may disappear. The main colours are green (nature), grey (city) and orange, suggesting smog and pollution. The pollution theme is continued by the plastic bottles in the water.

The presentation is rather unsubtle - besides the chapter name "Saving the Planet" at the top left, there are some prominent words displayed: wildlife, weather forecast, inspire, discover, protect, recycle, spectacular, rainforest, volcano, reuse, make a difference along with the learning aims. Having the illustration speaking on its own would allow for personal interpretation on the part of students, insofar as the conflicts are well presented, and the teacher

would not have to supply much extra material in order to get the conversation going in the classroom.



Figure 5, Explore 6, pp. 138-139 - the two starter pages at the beginning of the chapter

In general, the texts presented in this chapter are short and easy to understand, but if the class wants to delve deeper into any topic in the chapter they wish to learn more about, the teacher (or the students) will have to find additional information elsewhere. If the class is working with a particular cross-curricular topic, such as sustainable development, the additional information needed to gain deeper insight may come from textbooks in other subjects or from other texts.

“Spectacular nature” (pp. 140-141) positions the reader as an observer abroad (Perspective & position). It contains the task “What do you think of when you hear the word nature?”, which may be thought of as an “evaluate”-type CL activity in the Experience & re-design category. An “evaluate”-type activity involves thinking about what one already knows or has experienced, comparing it to other information, rephrasing or re-telling or adjusting one’s perspective.

“The lost city of Pompeii” (p. 142) and “The making of volcanoes” (p. 143) again positions the reader as an observer abroad (Perspective & position), The “Before you read” task is merely to

find Italy and Mount Vesuvius on a map. The post reading tasks – “What do you think people do with the minerals that come out of the volcanoes?” and “Tell your learning partner what a volcano is. Use the words: *planet, magma, erupt* and *lava*” - may be said to have an evaluate/rewrite/re-tell aspect (Experience & re-design).

“Interview with a survivor” (pp. 144-145) continues the topic of volcanoes. A girl whose family experienced the Mount St. Helen's eruption at close range was interviewed by a local journalist. The story positions the reader as an observer abroad. The “Before you read” task is once more to find the place on a map: “Find Mount St. Helens on a map. It is in the state of Washington, on the northwest coast of the USA.” The post reading task “What is the scariest part of the story? Discuss.” is an evaluate/rewrite/re-tell-style CL activity (Experience & re-design).

**BEFORE YOU READ** Find Mount St. Helens on a map. It is in the state of Washington, on the northwest coast of the USA.

**Did you know?** This is the worst volcanic eruption in the history of the United States. The landslide is one of the largest recorded on Earth.

**Interview with a survivor**  
 Mount St. Helens is an active volcano in the United States. It is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, which has over 160 active volcanoes. In 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted. It began with an earthquake and was followed by a huge landslide. Next, the volcano exploded, and the wind blew 520 million tons of ash across the United States. Everything went dark as far as 400 km from the volcano.

On that day, Jenny was camping with her family in Yakima, 137 km away from Mount St. Helens. Years later, Jenny is interviewed by a journalist from the local newspaper.

– Jenny, you were 12 years old at the time. Did you realise Mount St. Helens had erupted?  
 – No, we didn't! First, we heard a loud bang. A few hours later, we saw a giant black cloud coming towards us. It became darker and darker. We were wondering what was happening. Then, ash started falling down. We knew then that something was wrong. It was as dark as in the middle of the night...

– What did your parents do?  
 – Dad told my brother and I to get into the trailer and stay there. He went looking for Mom who had gone fishing. He told us he would be right back, but he was gone for three hours!

– Why was he gone for so long?  
 – He couldn't find Mom, but he met people who told him that Mount St. Helens had erupted.

– Did you leave then?  
 – We couldn't leave without my mother! Besides, ash got in everywhere, even inside the trailer. All the cars stopped working. Ash kept on falling the whole time. Dad tied a wet handkerchief over our mouths and noses. It helped us breathe.

– You must have been very scared. How did you get out of the campsite in the end?  
 – I was terrified... And I missed my mother so much... On top of that, we were running out of water and we were very thirsty. But my father saved us! He found a way to start the trailer and he drove us home. It was horrible to leave without Mom. I'll never forget this.

– I am terribly sorry about your mother, Jenny.  
 – Oh, don't be sorry! Mom survived! The rangers found her on the first day and took her to hospital. The first thing we did when we heard that was to visit her. I've never been so happy in my life!

**4** Discuss with your learning partner. What is the scariest thing about the story?

**MORE WORDS**  
 landslide – jordskred  
 ash – ask  
 realise – forstå  
 loud – høyt (om lyd)

**MORE WORDS**  
 handkerchief – lommeklærke  
 breathe – puste  
 terrified – vettskremt  
 running out of – å bli tomme for  
 drove – kjørte  
 rangers – skogvokterne

144 Explore My Workbook page 120-121 6 Saving our planet 145

Figure 6, Explore 6, pp. 144-145 - Interview with a survivor

The illustration on the grammar pages (“Plural nouns” and “Uncountable nouns”, pp. 146-147) offers some representation of diversity: American cowboys, two different fairies, a dark-skinned, healthy milk drinker, equal amount of boys and girls, an exhausted, longhaired footballer of indeterminate gender (Diversity & voice). The titles are written in English, and then translated to Norwegian, but the subtitles and the grammar principles are written in

Norwegian. The tasks are written in English. The placing of task 7 (“Look at the picture and read carefully. Which words are in front of the nouns?”) above the “Uncountable nouns” title makes it difficult to determine whether the instruction refers to the table above or to the illustration below. If it refers to the table above, the task is not very intellectually challenging for the sixth year. However, if it refers to the illustration below, it is a very good evaluating exercise (Experience & re-design), where they are using additional information already received and drawing on their experiences to create new knowledge about uncountable nouns.

“Weather forecast” and “Weather sayings” (pp. 148-149) again presents the reader with a block of information without any possibility of the reader participating. This positions the reader as an observer (Perspective & position), whether at home or abroad is undetermined. The tasks may include some CL activity if the “Choose another destination. What are you going to pack?” task on p. 148 does not limit the student to reading the weather forecast for Oslo and Anchorage and choosing sensible clothing (Experience & re-design). If the teacher allows the students to interpret the task in a wider manner: “Choose another destination anywhere. Look up the weather forecasts from different channels for this weekend. What channel are you going to trust and why, and what are you going to pack?” the task becomes CL activity, and not merely reading a table.

“Tropical rainforests” (pp. 150-151) also positions the reader as an observer abroad (Perspective & position). The pages present a generic tropical rainforest. The reader may assume it is somewhere in Central or South America both due to some of the animals presented - and that Amazonas is the largest tropical rainforest in the world. The different species of tropical pitcher plants may in general be found in tropical rainforests in South East Asia. There is no representation of animals or plants living in the tropical rainforests in Africa (the Congo Basin rainforest is considered the second largest in the world after the Amazonas), like the bonobo, the okapi or the forest elephant. Also, there is no mention of deforestation. The mini-facts (p. 151) show some CL activity in “Find more information about the animal you have chosen and prepare a mini-talk” on p. 151, which is drawing on the students’ experience and prior knowledge, allowing them to expand and rearrange their knowledge (Experience and re-design). Beyond that, it is all about facts: reading, understanding and applying.

“The people of the forest” (pp. 152-153) continues the tropical rainforest topic. The text about orangutans again positions the reader as an observer abroad (Perspective & position category). The “Before you read” task (“Look at the title and the pictures. What do you think this text is

about? What kind of text is it? Tell your learning partner.”) is an evaluate and discuss task (Experience & re-design). The text is presenting facts, both about the orangutans and that they are an endangered species due to humans cutting down their habitat - the first time human influence on the environment is mentioned, in the very last paragraph. The task is information finding: “Work with your learning partner. Search the internet. Find five animals that live in the rainforest and are endangered.”.

“Running Wild” (pp. 154-155) is the final text in the tropical rainforest topic. It positions the reader as an observer, and presents a “Before you read” evaluate/retell/discuss task (Experience & re-design): “Do you know what a *tsunami* is? Discuss with your learning partner.” Task 14: “What does Will mean? Find another way of saying this.” and task 16: “Are any of the animals on your list dangerous? Explain to your learning partner why they are dangerous.” may also be thought of as CL-style evaluate/rewrite/re-tell tasks (Experience & re-design).

“Mr. X. Plore’s writing tip” pages (pp. 156-157) present a scaffold for writing an informational text, and may be said to promote a CL-style “create” activity: Experience & re-design. In addition, the example repeats the facts about orangutans and humans destroying their habitats, reinforcing the message.

The three short stories in “In short” (p. 158) all present environmental issues and what some children in the same age range as the book’s target audience have done to help. The stories position the reader as an observer, and the only task is words to learn: make a difference, recycling, recycles, collecting, insulation. In addition, diversity in the form of disability is presented, as one of the helpers is sitting in a wheelchair (Diversity & voice). There are two sisters from Bali, two brothers from Australia and a boy from Ohio. All were of similar age as the intended audience when they started their mission of saving the environment. Norwegian students are already familiar with the concept of recycling in their local day-to-day life, but hopefully some of them may begin to think of expanding their scope.

Continuing from the previous “In short” page, “Kids can make a difference!” (pp. 159-160) expands on the topic, telling the three stories in a more detailed manner. Again, diversity in the form of disability is presented, as Daniel Clarke has cerebral palsy. Similarly, the five children presented come from different countries, but there is no representation of young global changemakers or environmental activists from Norway or even Scandinavia, like Greta Thunberg or Penelope Lea, the UNICEF climate ambassador. Page 159 contains the task “What

can you do to make a difference?” which is an evaluate/create task (Experience & re-design) and is a good example of how to invite the reader to become an active participant (Perspective & position).

“Reduce, reuse and recycle!” (p. 161) continues the environmental topic, and contains the tasks “What do you do with waste at your school? Is there anything you could do differently?”, “Find out what a litterbug is. Is being called a litterbug a positive thing? Explain why.” and “Do you have any tips on how to help with the 3 Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle)? Make a list to share with your classmates.”, which are asking the student to evaluate and/or create. Again, CL-style activities: activating their knowledge and re-designing their environment inside and outside of the classroom.

The “Recycle rap” (pp. 162-163) concludes the topic. It contains no typical CL-style activities, but it does position the students at home as they can relate to the genre. The pages position the readers as participants, and as a whole, they may be utilised by the teacher to encourage CL-type thinking. It will be the teacher’s responsibility to make the most out of the text in terms of CL activity, though. The first task included (“Work with your learning partner. Look at the drawings. Find out which bin you have to use to throw things away.”) may be said to be an evaluate-type task instead of an “apply your knowledge” -type task. The second task (“Find at least 8 nouns in the text and write them in the singular and plural. For example: *shower* - *showers*”) does not really offer that much beyond being a basic grammar exercise, when one thinks about what could be done in the classroom, given the genre of rap and the topic of environmental issues.

The final two pages in the chapter (pp. 164-165) contain tasks that have some CL elements: evaluate, create, re-tell, re-write: all under the category Experience & re-design. Examples are the “Let’s explore!” task “Find out what your school does to be eco-friendly. Write sentences, draw pictures and make a wall poster or a digital book describing what you do.” and the “Let’s try it!” task “Work in pairs and prepare a short digital presentation or mini-talk. Choose an animal you have read about in this chapter or find information about a rainforest animal on the internet.” The final page is a drawing that points back to the topics presented in the chapter: a volcano, a rainforest, orangutans and other species presented, and two boys - one is sitting in a wheelchair.

There is some CL-type activity present in this chapter, if one interprets the activities with CL in mind, giving the book the benefit of doubt in some cases. The main impression of the chapter is a collection by topic of short texts without any CL activity in mind. The topics are dealing with environmental issues, teaching the students the corresponding words in English and linking the textbook with the core curriculum's *Respect for nature and environmental awareness* aim. There are some grammar instructions, and there are some scaffolding on how to write an informational text. The starter pages were a promising start, and topics like the orangutans becoming an endangered species due to human activity and the need for recycling offers a starting place for CL-type activities, if the class or the teacher wish to do so.

While this description might seem overly critical, it is worth remembering that this study examines whether English textbooks in Norwegian upper primary schools help develop students' CL skills. The aim is to find how each chapter offers opportunities for CL activity, but reading the chapters from a CL viewpoint, one is using the CL skillset: the ability to question and validate information, to put it into context and to discover underlying patterns and possible hidden intentions.

### 3.4: *Engelsk 6*: Textbook (Cappelen Damm)

The structure of *Engelsk 6* consists of an initial introduction to the book, four large chapters and a glossary. Each chapter has a two-page starter spread, containing a drawing with very little textual information, leaving the readers free to use their imagination and ponder the meaning of the different parts of the picture. Each chapter is divided into sub-topics, starting with a quote (Roald Dahl's "There are no strangers in here, just friends you haven't met" in "Summer memories" in chapter 1 – "Friendship"), a couple of jokes ("Q: What did the beach say to the people who came back for the summer? A: Long time no sea." in "Summer memories"), a mini-glossary and some "Talk and tell" conversation starters, and finally the learning aims for the topic. In general, there are more and longer texts available in this book, and the language used is more advanced, both in terms of vocabulary (the glossary is twice the size of the glossary in *Explore 6*) and the complexity of the sentences. This book also uses codes from one to three which appear to be difficulty levels, but it does not explain to the reader what the different numbers mean, it merely asks the reader a question: "What do these numbers tell you?" (*Engelsk 6*, p.4). Illustrations are mainly cartoons by the same artist throughout the book, interspersed with original illustrations in excerpts from books and photographs in sub-topics



such as wild animals and mini-biographies. Each chapter ends with “Read and enjoy!” (excerpts from novels), “Speak up!” (vocal presentation tasks) and “Write it!” (writing tasks).

The textbook does not focus on grammar, but the chapters have pointers to grammar work in the accompanying workbook. Not every school chooses to buy the workbook, and analysing the contents of the workbooks is beyond the scope of this study. The textbook seems to expect that the students are comfortable working in English to the point that many of the texts could be equally at home in a book intended for native English speakers of comparable age. The only Norwegian words present are in the mini-glossaries. Due to the sheer size of the chapter, the sub-chapters have varying topics, but the length of the texts and the number of facts presented appear to encourage “deep learning”, as described by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training: “gradually developing knowledge and understanding of terms, methods and connections between subject areas, while reflecting over one’s own learning and putting knowledge to use in different ways, in familiar and unfamiliar situations, alone or with others” (Udir, 2019a, my translation).

### **Findings:**

The starter spread (pp. 142-143) in chapter four: “Down to Earth”, just as in the preceding chapters, contains very little text - just a couple of key phrases: the chapter name itself, “High school”, “Evacuation centre” and a series of question marks. The illustration contains many thought-provoking conversation starters, and many pointers to the contents of the following pages. The colours are bright: green, orange, grey and a dark blue with a tinge of purple. Overall, the illustration gives an idea of opposites and contrasts: grey vs green, nature vs city, peaceful vs threatening, the evacuation centre is bright red/orange in contrast to the green grass. Some people are seeking shelter or fleeing with all their belongings (even an entire house on someone’s back!) on grey asphalt, while others are peacefully admiring the insects and flowers in a green field. There is a Native American totem pole on the “green” side, possibly representing history and the natives’ respect for nature and traditional ways of living. The skyscrapers hint at large cities, environmental issues and climate changes. In short, there are enough contrasts in the illustration for discussion in the classroom, positioning the reader as an observer, highlighting climate changes and building awareness.



Figure 7, pp. 142-143 - the two starter pages at the beginning of the chapter

Beyond the three topic-related jokes (“Q: What do you call a bear with no ears? A: B.”), the first two pages of “Animals in the wild” (pp. 144-145) again present the reader with a Native American totem pole, and a quote from the Arapaho people: “*When we show our respect for other living things, they respond with respect for us*”. As the Arapaho tribe had no tradition of totem poles, this may indicate a generalisation of all Native Americans, illustrating an outsider’s perception of “Native Americans”. There are conversation starters in the tasks: “What do you know / Why does...”, Experience & re-design-type activities. The pages point at sustainable development, including topics like climate, ecosystems, endangered species, habitats and respect for nature, which are topics in the national core curriculum, along with cultural diversity, critical thinking, ethical consciousness and democracy and participation.

“A grizzly giant” (pp. 146-149) is a level one set of factual texts about the grizzly bear, and like the level two “The beautiful bison” (pp. 150-153) and the level three “The bald eagle” (pp. 154-157) texts, the reader is again positioned as an observer abroad. The answers to the first three task questions about the grizzly bear may be found on the last page, but the answer to the fourth and final task question may be found on the first page, thus ensuring that everyone reads

the entire text. The answers to the tasks in the bison text may not be found in the text, and must be sought elsewhere, asking the students to create their own knowledge, a CL Experience & redesign-type activity. Some of the answers to the task questions in “The bald eagle” text may be found in the text itself, whereas some must be found using other sources, again CL Experience & re-design activities.

All three animals are presented with a connection to the Native Americans, and they all present environmental issues due to human activity, but there are no opposing views presented, the texts just present facts from the privileged position of the author. Again, similar to the totems and the Arapaho quote, it is interesting how Native Americans are linked to environmental issues, suggesting a Western stereotype about indigenous people being “closer to the earth” than themselves. “The beautiful bison” text explains that the dwindling number of bison was due to the European farmers and their domestic cattle, without any suggestion that there might have been other contributing factors. The dominant voice is the author. The texts would be equally at home in an English Science textbook.

The introduction pages to the “Climate and living” sub-chapter (pp. 158-159) follows the standard pattern throughout the book: a thought-provoking (the Contrasting views category) quote, “If the clouds move against the wind, rain will follow,” (a weather proverb), three topic-related jokes (“Q: How do the hurricanes see? A: With one eye.”), introduction of the learning aims and explanations of new words, and a series of “Talk and tell” discussion tasks/conversation starters that aims to let the students examine their prior knowledge and experiences of the subject from different perspectives.

“The day the hurricane came” (pp. 160-162), “An uneasy morning” (pp. 163-165) and “Better safe than sorry” (pp. 166-171) tell the stories of three children’s individual experience of the same hurricane. The reader is positioned as an observer abroad, and the stories told are about daily life. Mario (level one) and Lena (level two) both have relatives nearby, and go to them with their families to escape the approaching hurricane. Mario and Lena’s stories are told until the car leaves the town. The last two illustrations show Lena first carrying the green bag her friend Lola had left on her front step towards the car, and then sitting in the back seat of the car with the bag. The penultimate paragraph in the text contains a pointer to the contents of the bag and a connection point to Lola’s story: “It seemed to move slightly, but Lena was so busy worrying that she did not notice.”

Lola (level three) has no relatives nearby, so the family has to go to the local evacuation centre. Her story starts inside the evacuation centre, where she spends the night worrying about her missing cat, having argued with her parents about leaving without it. The rest of the family sleeps. There is no explanation given of what's inside the bag Lena brought with her, and no illustration that even hints that Lola's cat is in the bag in Lena's car before halfway through Lola's story - at the bottom of p. 169. The explanation, in the form of a text message from Lena when Lola finally has the phone service back, is in the final part of the story (p. 171). Mario and Lena have relatives nearby, Lola has only her family - and her cat, which is missing. It requires a deep understanding of English and a high level of reading skills to get this part of the story.

The levels differ mainly in terms of text length, not in complexity, as the language used in general is fairly advanced. We are given different perspectives, which is good from a CL point of view. Their stories are interlocked, as all three know each other, but the reader will need to read all three stories to get the full picture. The explanation of the etymological origin of the word 'hurricane' might be more appropriate on level three. There are layers of complexity in this book: the illustration of Lola's cat in the green bag appears for the third time on p. 169 - not only is it present on the two-page starter illustration in chapter four, but it appears for the first time on the title page of the book. Again, this illustrates the complexity and the level of understanding that is expected in the book.

Despite the sub-chapter's title ("Climate and living"), the fact box on the level three pages is the only direct mention of climate change: one paragraph about climate change and more extreme weather, hinting that the three stories (or similar) may happen more often in the future. Although this might appear to be limited, the effects of climate change are shown in the three children's stories: having to flee their homes due to the approaching hurricane. The Norwegian students of a similar age will be able to relate to this. Even though they may not have experienced it themselves, some may have, and in our media-driven world, knowledge of catastrophes elsewhere is accessible, even unavoidable. Both the texts and the tasks fall into the Experience and redesign category. The texts are positioning the readers to discuss the effects of climate change: Power & motives category.

In terms of representation, diversity & voice, there is a difference in the illustrations; the only family that is not white is placed at the evacuation centre. Dark-skinned people on the run from some dangerous situation is often portrayed in the media. This might be considered

stereotyping, insofar as the non-white people are depicted as fleeing a dangerous situation without the same resources as the white people. We are presented with a thought-provoking situation, depending on the reader's experience and perspective. A student that has heard or read about how Latin-American families are looked upon in some parts of the USA may also question the positioning of Lola by the author in this text.



*Figure 8, p. 170 - Lola and her family at the local evacuation centre*

The next subchapter (“Curious minds”, pp. 172-185) also starts with a thought-provoking quote, this time by Stephen Hawking: “Look up at the stars and not down on your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder what makes the universe exist. Be curious.” (p.172), three jokes related to the topic (“Q: What gets sharper the more you use it? A: Your brain.”) and the learning aims and conversation starters.

There is a short “fact box” about the brain, and a short biography about Stephen Hawking (pp. 174-176). Diversity is represented insofar as Hawking was disabled. The message is that it is what you are able to do that matters, not what you are *not* able to do: Hawking wrote not only books about space-time theory and black holes, but also children’s books, despite being limited to a touchpad computer and a speech synthesiser.

The entire subchapter differs from the rest of the book. It speaks directly to the readers, telling them that scientists stay curious as adults, asking them to be active participants, to be inquisitive and maybe make a difference in the future; tomorrow’s scientists. The chapter suggests that the reader also has a responsibility for the climate and the wildlife.

The book extract (pp. 180-185: “George’s Secret Key to the Universe”) is from a book by Stephen Hawking and his daughter, Lucy. George is presented as a normal, curious boy with eco-friendly parents, so there is an environmental aspect. George is not allowed to visit the house next door, but now he has to - not because he is curious, but because he has to find his pig, which has escaped through a hole in the fence. The extract ends as George plunges through the hole, eyes closed.

The reader is positioned to take George’s side: wanting a computer, to visit a theme park, to ride the roller coaster, to travel by plane - normal things youngsters do. George’s parents are not portrayed in a positive manner. Conflict between parent/child is not unusual in childrens’ books. It is possible that the description of George’s parents does environmentalism a disservice. Are the parents described this way as an argument in the environmental debate, or merely in order to create a conflict between George and his parents? His parents, from a privileged position, shun all modern contraptions, candles instead of electricity, no car, washing by hand, grinding their own flour. The reader is more likely to think “poor George!” than envy him. “All he had was his pig.” This text, included in a chapter about climate, portrays an eco-conscious family as living a boring life. If the underlying message is that improving the environment comes at a cost is by conscious design it falls in the Power & motives category: the text is trying to influence the reader. Whether this is the original author’s design, or by the authors of the textbook, who decided to include this particular extract is another question. This may be a possible discussion in class.

The accompanying questions are reflection questions, and a high level of language competence is required. The students are asked both to reflect on the differences between George and his

parents (both Power & motives and Position & perspective categories), and to speculate on what will happen afterwards (Experience & re-design). The follow-up questions are trying to make the reader choose sides: between George's way of looking at life and that of his parents, but possibly also in the wider perspective of the modern way of life versus an eco-conscious lifestyle. Children will have no problem identifying with George and his lack of everything present in their modern lifestyle, but they are also concerned about the future of the planet and maybe realise that changes must be made.

The final part of the chapter is, as in the previous chapters, a "Read and enjoy!" story, (pp. 186-191) positioning the reader as a tourist abroad in the Outer Hebrides, but the way the story is written positions the reader more as a participant than an observer: the story is told in the first position by Jamie - he is addressing the reader directly, as if in a face-to-face conversation. Jamie's family has moved from Glasgow to the island where his mother grew up, so she is happy again, and so is Jamie. His father, though, still stays in Glasgow during the working week, only seeing his family on weekends when the weather allows it. Jamie tells about how he loves it there, even though his biggest fear is drowning. Even though the main character is a boy, the person alone in a small sailboat is a girl his own age. The story should appeal to both boys and girls. Without having read the book the excerpt is from, it appears to be about approaching adolescence, being true to oneself and facing one's fears. The CL activity here is to learn more about oneself, since students of a similar age may identify with the struggles the main character experiences. We encourage students to read, to aid their cognitive development and to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them and about themselves, the way they think, solve problems and explore the world around them.

The final two pages (pp. 192-193) are the "Speak up!" and "Write it!" pages, as in the other chapters. The "Speak up!" task is to use one's curiosity and make a three-minute podcast, working in small groups. The task suggests some topics: "Is there life on other planets?" "What will life be like a hundred years from now?" "If you had a superpower, what would it be? How would you use it?" "If you had the opportunity to time travel, what time period would you visit?" There is plenty of room for using one's imagination and creativity. The "Write it!" page contains a re-write (Experience & re-design type) task and provides good scaffolding for the requested animal article.

The chapter contains both situations that may encourage CL discussions and direct CL-type tasks. The starter spread contains enough contrasts to provide opportunity for CL discussions,

but also function as a pointer to the following topics, and re-visiting the starter spread after completing a topic may spark new discussions in the classroom, knitting the various sub-topics together. The length and language complexity of the texts may be a challenge for the average student, but the tasks provide scope for CL-type create/re-tell/re-write activities on the student's level of English. Overall, the chapter provides the means for much CL activity in the classroom.

### 3.5: *Quest 6*: Textbook (Aschehoug)

The structure in *Quest 6* provides an initial introduction to the book, six chapters, a list of irregular verbs and a glossary. Pages are coded in two levels: one and two - according to the book itself in order to differentiate the amount of text. The chapters start with a two-page starter spread, with illustrations, learning aims and conversation starters. The illustrations are varied - collages, cartoons and photographs. Several graphic designers have been involved. Two cartoon characters appear throughout the book: Zoom (a dragon) and Uni (a unicorn), telling jokes, giving small tips and introducing themes such as "Language work" and "Write". The chapters are divided into different topics. Each topic starts with a "Before reading" task, most have a set of "After reading" and "Talk about it" tasks - or both.

#### **Findings:**

The two-page starter spread in chapter five: "Come Rain or Shine" (pp. 144-145) contains a thought-provoking cartoon showing examples of extreme weather: a tornado, rain and a scorching sun, along with learning aims and conversation starters that ask for previous knowledge and experience. There is also a task that asks the reader to skim through the entire chapter to find names, texts and facts. "Have you experienced..." and "Do you know..." types of tasks offer CL-activities in the Experience & re-design category.





Figure 9, pp. 144-145 - the two starter pages at the beginning of the chapter

The next page, “California Dreamin’” (p. 146) presents the lyrics from the song by The Mamas & the Papas and contains conflicting views (Contrasting views category). Firstly, the song text itself where the singer wants to escape the cold winter and move to somewhere warm, sunny, free and safe, but knows he can’t do so due to obligations or without losing someone dear to him. In the “Before reading” and “After reading” tasks the reader is asked to think about his inner conflict, thus asking the reader to take the singer’s position (Perspective & position and Experience & re-design). There is also a single reference to the difference in spelling in the US and the UK (Diversity & voice category). The reader is positioned as an observer abroad (Perspective & position category). There is scope for connecting the song with the student’s experiences, but the tasks leave much of the work to the teacher.

Following this, the text “What to Do on a Rainy Day?” (p. 147) again positions the reader as observer (Perspective & position category), probably abroad as the illustration is very American-looking with American props and colours. This may be a link with the song on the previous page, and the weather is a topic on both pages. The page is a starting point for conversations in the classroom, and even though the illustration is pointing to an American

bedroom, there is much a Norwegian child will be familiar with: a guitar, a deck of cards, a computer, a mobile phone and a Lego box, just to name a few.

Moving on to the next text, “Language work” (p. 149) the focus is on grammar instructions regarding the future tense. The language tasks are straightforward, and the illustrations are representative: different ethnicities and genders (Diversity & voice) and present everyday situations (talking about the weather, sitting in the bus, dreaming, being asleep), so the reader is positioned at home (Perspective & position category). Beyond that, there is little CL activity presented by the page itself.

The next text, “Thor - the Thunder God” (pp. 149 - 151) positions the reader closer to home in space, if not in time (Perspective & position category). The Vikings and their beliefs are told from a Scandinavian perspective: Vikings are presented as not only famous warriors and sailors, but also great storytellers. This represents diversity, but other beliefs are silenced - and also other representations of the Vikings. The monks of Lindisfarne might disagree. The fact that other Norse gods had a weekday named after them is also omitted, effectively silencing them as well and further enhancing Thor’s standing.

Page 149 and 150 is marked as level one, and page 151 as level two, so the difficulty level switches in the middle of the story. In addition, the “After reading” tasks require that the student have read the level two page 151 in order to answer task c, d and e. Effectively, there are no tasks for a level one student. It is possible that the tasks should have been presented in a different order. The “Talk about it” tasks are about thunder and lightning in general, and might be placed as “Before reading” tasks, while the “After reading” tasks are reading comprehension tasks. One perplexing point of language is that the authors use the adjective *cleverer*, while the students usually are taught to use *more clever*. They are also taught to avoid starting a paragraph with *But* or *Because*, which both are used in this text. In this context, it could represent Global English (Diversity & voice category), as the author of the text (Lise Lunge-Larsen) is Norwegian, belonging to the Expanding circle of English.

The next text, “Blizzard Stops Air Traffic” (pp. 152-153) may be said to both position the reader as an observer abroad (the setting is an airport in the US) and at home (Norwegian readers will know of the problems associated with snowstorms). The illustration shows great diversity among the passengers, but the airport crew are all female, both in the text itself and the accompanying cartoon: this may be intentional or unintentional, but whether females are

portrayed as problem-solvers or as doing the less important service jobs is unclear. The only characters speaking are all female (Jessica, Mrs Johnson and the nameless ground staff) except for the unknown person speaking through the loudspeaker (Diversity & voice). To name a character “Mrs Johnson” is more formal than what is customary in Norway, but common in English. Mrs Johnson telling her daughter Jessica that “there is no plane available” is possibly an Americanism, as the students are taught to say “There are no planes available” (Diversity & voice, and possibly an example of Global English). The “After reading” tasks are comprehension tasks, but the “Role play”, especially the task with different endings (spend Christmas at the airport or in Miami) offers create and re-tell/re-write options (Experience & re-design category).

“Extreme Adventure” (pp. 154-155) again positions the reader as an observer - a tourist abroad (Perspective & position). The “Before reading” task (“Read the title and look at the pictures. Find the places on the map.”) is impossible to perform if taken literally - there is not enough information available to do the task. The title is “Extreme Adventure”, and two of the pictures are without any words - a shark and three sled dogs, so the only picture that is possible to locate is the third, with a sign reading “Death Valley National Park”. The teacher will have to clarify that the students should read the titles (“Hawaii Shark Dive”, “Death Valley Adventure” and “Alaskan Dog Sledding and Aurora Viewing”) and look at the pictures. “After reading” tasks are split between a reading comprehension task, a task where information will have to be sought elsewhere and two tasks about giving one’s opinion, explaining the reasons why (Experience & redesign). Having an advert for tourism in a chapter where some of the stated learning aims is “to talk about how weather affects our lives” and “discuss the effects of human life on nature” may be an example of the chapter presenting unrelated and possibly conflicting views, depending on how one regards the effects of travel on the environment. The two pages may trigger a spontaneous classroom conversation about whether this type of extreme adventure tourism is necessary in a world where environmental issues and that the future of the planet is at risk are in the media on a daily basis, but the teacher will most likely have to broach the subject herself.

The next text, “Tornado Facts” (pp. 156-157) again positions the reader as an observer abroad (Perspective & position). Some facts about tornadoes are presented, there is a “Time to laugh” joke (Q: “Did the tornado pass the maths test?” A: “Yeah, it was a breeze”) and a newspaper article with a report of the results of a tornado in Alabama. The “After reading” tasks are

mainly reading comprehension tasks. The “Role play” task offers ‘create’ options that open up for experience, relate to the students and prompt empathy (Experience & re-design category).

Following the tornado topic, “Colors of the wind (Pocahontas)” (pp. 158-159) is a text that offers the basis for much CL activity, but the tasks do not follow up enough on this opportunity. Even though the story of Pocahontas already is told in an earlier chapter, the illustration, taken directly from the Disney movie, and the added name of Pocahontas influence the reader’s interpretation. It is possible that the reader would interpret the lyrics of the song more freely without the illustration and the name given in the title. The very first verse in the song is omitted for some reason, perhaps indicating a silenced voice, but Native Americans are dominant and put on centre stage here (Diversity & voice). There is, once more, a single sample of the different spellings in US English versus UK English: color / colour (Diversity & voice).

The “Before reading task (“Which part of nature or weather do you enjoy the most?”) and the “After reading” tasks b (“Who is Pocahontas singing to?”) and c (“What do you think “colors of the wind” means?”) are reflection questions (Experience & re-design) and may trigger a discussion if the teacher intends to follow the core curriculum’s “Respect for nature and environmental awareness” aim. The teacher, if she wants to, has ample opportunity to explore Diversity & voice, Perspective & position and Power & motives on the basis of these two pages: who is marginalised or silenced, who has the privileged positions and who shows respect for nature around them.

The following text, “A Highway for Bees” (pp. 160-161) positions the reader at home in Norway, but as an observer (Perspective & position). Once more, there is a “Time to laugh!” on-topic joke (Q: “What do we call a bee born in May?” A: “A Maybee!”). The “After reading” tasks are all reading comprehension tasks. The “Talk about it!” tasks offer the opportunity to give one’s opinion (Experience & redesign), but the difference between a bee hotel and a beehive is insufficiently explained in the text for most students. The text uses the spelling “green organisations”, but the mini-glossary next to it uses “green organizations”. It is possibly a representation of Global English (Diversity & voice), but, intended or otherwise, it could still be confusing for the student.

The final text in the chapter, “How to Build an Insect Hotel” (pp. 162-163) is tagged with “Write”, but is presented as a scaffolding text without a follow-up task where the students are

asked to write their own set of instructions. The only task given is “Two stars and a wish” which is a CL evaluate-type activity, and the concept is introduced earlier in the book (Experience & re-design). Here, though, it appears to ask the student to evaluate the author’s work. It seems like the main task: to write one’s own set of instructions is missing here.

*Quest 6* appears to be similar to *Explore 6* in terms of the length of the texts and the complexity of language used. The texts are shorter and easier to understand than the texts in *Engelsk 6*, but the topic shifts from one text to another. All the topics are connected to the chapter’s main weather and environment topic in some way, but there is seemingly no CL strategy behind the selection of texts, apart from that the “Extreme Adventure” text may have been included for such a purpose. The only other topic presenting several texts on the same topic is “Tornado facts” with its small factual texts and the newspaper article. The tasks, like in *Explore 6*, offer some CL activity, and the texts also offer opportunities for CL discussion and activity. It is, however, up to the teacher to make the most out of the possibilities the texts present.

### 3.6: Discussion and final thoughts

Each of the research questions will be answered, but before that, a few observations about the difference in how the texts are organised in each chapter. The three chapters analysed differ in how they approach the topic of environmental awareness with regard to the number of texts on a particular theme. The length and complexity of the texts and the connection between one text and the following text also varies between the chapters, even though they are written to comply with the same curriculum.

*Explore 6* presents several texts on a particular subtopic: there are three texts on volcanoes, four texts on rainforests and four texts on environmental issues. In a similar manner, *Engelsk 6* presents the three texts “A grizzly giant”, “The beautiful bison” and “The bald eagle” on wild American animals, all divided into short sub-texts with a link to Native Americans’ beliefs.

*Engelsk 6* further presents the three texts “The day the hurricane came”, “An uneasy morning” and “Better safe than sorry” on the same hurricane. It also presents the three texts “Curious minds”, “The brainy brain” and “Curious kids” on science.

*Quest 6* contains only a few samples of topically connected texts: the two texts “California Dreamin’” and “What to Do on a Rainy Day?” and the subtopic about tornadoes: the short

“Tornado facts” and the newspaper article “Tornado Turns Towns into Rubble”. The two texts about insects, “A Highway for Bees” and “How to Build an Insect Hotel” may also be said to be topically connected. In the rest of the chapter, the following text is on an entirely different sub-topic from the text that preceded it. A number of texts on similar sub-topics opens for more CL-type activities such as comparing and evaluating them. *Explore 6* and *Engelsk 6* offer more in terms of topically connected texts. The texts co-exist, though, and do not challenge each other.

*Explore 6* and *Quest 6* are similar in language level and length of texts. *Engelsk 6* stands out with more complex language and longer texts, which also is illustrated by the differences in the accompanying glossaries. Choosing two random pages in the glossaries (p. 2 and p. 5), all three books had slightly more than 200 words in the six columns of word explanations on the two pages. While *Explore 6* had 21 columns of word explanations and *Quest 6* had 22 columns, *Engelsk 6*'s glossary consists of 43 columns of word explanations. Which words the authors choose to present and explain in a textbook glossary will be of course dependent on the topics presented in the book. Having twice as many words in the glossary, though, points to high expectations for the students' language competence, especially when taking the complexity of the language used in the texts in consideration.

This difference in expected language competence leads to another question to be considered. Do complex, advanced, long texts encourage CL thinking, or merely leave the reader struggling with the surface message, unable to look behind the scenes and question the motives of the author? Would shorter and easier to understand text help the students to overcome this hurdle? There is no simple answer to which textbook one should choose with a view to developing CL competence in English, and trying to answer this question would require a study on its own. The English language competence in the class in question will be a major factor. Easy or complex texts aside, the students need to have the metacognition required: awareness of basic CL principles (no texts are neutral, all texts are positioned by the author and seek to position their reader) and how to apply them in their first language. Moving on to the research questions, the discussion continues with an analysis of whether textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools support the development of CL skills.

*How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools position the reader?*

Texts positioning the reader as a passive observer, at home or abroad, will reinforce the position of the text itself as an authority, and if this positioning is the only easily detectable CL aspect in the text, then the text can not be said to directly stimulate CL activity. It may still be used in CL work, though, as all text can be read critically, but it will require greater effort from the teacher: providing conflicting or contradicting texts, texts with a different perspective or asking her students leading or thought-provoking questions.

In the three chosen chapters, the reader is most often positioned as an observer abroad, apart from in some very few texts (“A Highway for Bees” in *Quest 6* (pp. 160-161), set in Oslo, positions the reader at home - or close to home, for students outside of Oslo using this book. *Quest 6* positions the reader as a tourist in “Extreme adventure” (pp. 154-155).

There are few traditional English-speaking tourist travel destinations, like London, New York and Sydney presented in the three chapters. For Norwegian travellers, perhaps Hawaii, Death Valley and Fairbanks, Alaska (“Extreme Adventure”, *Quest 6*, pp. 154-155) come closest. Instead, *Quest 6* presents the reader with a nameless place in the USA on a winter’s day, an equally nameless American teenager’s room, an unnamed American airport, Lee County in Alabama and finally Oslo. It must be mentioned that the theme for the entire *Quest 6* textbook is USA, it is not surprising that most places presented are American. It is more surprising that it mentions Thor, the thunder god and the bee hotels in Oslo. *Engelsk 6* presents the reader with three North American wild animals and their habitats (mentioning briefly Alaska, the Great Plains between the Mississippi river and the Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone National Park and Florida) and an unnamed American town somewhere in the hurricane belt. Cambridge gets a short mention during the presentation of Stephen Hawking, thereafter the unnamed place where George and his parents live, and finally a small, unnamed island in the St Kilda archipelago in the Outer Hebrides. Throughout the chapter, all places presented are either in the USA or in Great Britain. *Explore 6* is the most varied when it comes to locations: it presents Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius, Mount St Helens, we are then given weather forecasts for Oslo, New York, Anchorage and Cape Town, followed by a generic description of a tropical rainforest. After that, the book presents orangutans in the wild (mentioning Indonesia, Borneo and Sumatra in the process) and short portraits of two sisters from Bali, two brothers from Australia and a boy from Ohio.

As mentioned in the theory chapter, according to general CL theory all texts try to position the reader, and the texts try to move the reader’s position closer to the authors’ own position, and

the authors' views of the world and any biases they may have. A text positioning the reader as an active participant may not necessarily lose its authority, especially a text in a textbook used in the classroom, but CL reading starts with actively reading and questioning the world around us and the motives of the author behind a text. Any text suggesting that the reader should be curious and ask questions is a small step in a direction towards CL, even if it is not directly suggested that the questions should be asked of the text itself.

The tasks "What can you do to make a difference?" (p. 159) and "What do you do with waste at your school? Is there anything you could do differently?" (p. 161) in *Explore 6* both position the readers as possible participants. The entire sub-chapter "Curious minds" (*Engelsk 6*, pp. 172-179) stands out, as so many of the texts and tasks position the readers as active participants: someone who may make a difference, provided they are curious and ask questions. There are short fact texts about the brain and a Stephen Hawking mini-biography (referencing his work on the universe, space-time theory and black holes) that position the reader as an observer or a receiver of known facts in the same manner as most of the other chapters. The overall impression of the sub-chapter, however, is that it is about science depending on curiosity and questions being asked. The Stephen Hawking quote "Look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder what makes the universe exist. Be curious." (p.172), "Curious children" (p.177), "Driven by curiosity" (p.178), "Famous scientists" (p.178), "Learning from science" (p. 178) and "Tomorrow's scientists" (p. 179) in *Engelsk 6* all suggest that science is important. The authors are positioning a scientific mindset as an important mode of thought, naming famous scientists and pointing out the fact that they stayed curious about the world around them and never stopped asking questions, no matter how much they had learnt.

Not only are these texts in accordance with the LK-20 aims in "Critical thinking and ethical awareness": "assess different sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed" and "seek a balance between respect for established knowledge and the explorative and creative thinking required to develop new knowledge" (Udir, 2020a), which are phrases that suggests a CL mindset, but there is a distinct interdisciplinary undertone to the sub-chapter's references to the brain, the universe and science in general. In short, "Curious minds" is the only sub-chapter that is consistently positioning the reader as an active participant.

*How do English textbooks represent the different varieties of Global Englishes?*



Even though the new LK-20 English curriculum makes a special mention that English is a global language, the three chapters included in this study do not present any varieties of Global Englishes besides the two instances in *Quest 6* where the fact that US English spelling and UK English spelling in some cases differ is pointed out (gray/grey, p. 146 and color/colour, p. 159), and two possible Americanisms in “Blizzard Stops Air Traffic” (pp. 152-153). In the final paragraph on page 153 in *Explore 6*: “The people of the forest” there is an interesting phrase: “Land is cleared to grow palm oil”. To put it another way, this could be viewed as a sample of Global English, as one grows oil palm trees in order to produce palm oil. The book does not present it as such, though, so it might be incidental.

The books take the reader to various places worldwide, but the dominant language form in the three chapters is standard British English. The reader does not meet any representatives of Kachru’s outer or expanding circles, even the two sisters from Bali in *Explore 6* are presented in standard English. Beyond that, every character presented belongs in the inner circle - Great Britain, USA, Australia. The texts in the three chapters do not prepare the readers for communicating with a non-native English speaker who is resorting to using English as a Lingua Franca, as there are no non-standard phrases represented. Today, students will most likely use English in communication with both native and other non-native English speakers, and this should be reflected in the samples of language presented in the textbooks. The teacher will have to source this elsewhere, through additional texts, whether written texts, audio samples or videos.

With relevance to CL, as mentioned earlier, English is not a single language anymore, and even the language used in the inner circle countries differs. In today’s world, where much of the English used is as a Lingua Franca in order to communicate with other non-native English speakers, perhaps textbooks should reflect this and present samples of Global Englishes, signifying that replicating the inner-circle pronunciation is of less importance compared to being able to communicate effectively. This might help both students and teachers in reaching the LK-20 aim that “the pupils shall become confident users of English so that they can use English to learn, communicate and connect with others” (Udir, 2020b). That confidence does not have to be based on the mastery of the standard RP English textbooks present, but could equally well be based on being able to communicate fluently in English, albeit with a noticeable accent. If the primary focus were to be on effective communication and interpretation, this would support CL.

LK-20 is quite detailed on what is the expected level of ability when it comes to oral skills: “Developing oral skills in English means using the spoken language gradually more accurately and with more nuances in order to communicate on different topics in formal and informal situations *with a variety of receivers with varying linguistic backgrounds.*” (LK-20 on oral skills, my italics). Being on the receiving end of a conversation with speakers with varying linguistic backgrounds is also important to develop effective communication skills. In order to correctly interpret the speaker’s intended meaning, the listener might have to be familiar with a range of different dialects and samples of Global Englishes. Likewise, LK-20 also says about reading in English that reading “means reading and finding information in multimedia texts with competing messages and using reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit information.” It also states that “The development of reading skills in English progresses... ..to reading varied and complex texts with fluency and comprehension and being increasingly able to critically reflect on and assess different types of texts.” (LK-20 on reading in English). Again, the English LK-20 curriculum makes statements that references what CL skills are about, and emphasises that this kind of activity should also take place in the English class.

The analysed chapters present standard British English and, for the most part, inner circle countries and characters. Other chapters or the accompanying audio files may contain samples of Global Englishes, though, but this is beyond the scope of the study.

*How is diversity represented in English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools, worldwide, in Norway and in the Norwegian classroom?*

The LK-20 core values mention diversity several times. In sub-chapter 1.1 (Human dignity) it states: “School must consider the diversity of pupils and facilitate for each pupil to experience belonging in school and society” (Udir, 2020a). In 1.2 (Identity and cultural diversity) it says “A common framework gives and shall give room for diversity, and the pupils must be given insight into how we live together with different perspectives, attitudes and views of life. The experiences the pupils gain in the encounter with different cultural expressions and traditions help them to form their identity. A good society is founded on the ideals of inclusiveness and diversity.” (Udir, 2020a). However, the LK-20 core values do not define the term “diversity” further. The traditional national minorities in Norway are mentioned, but in today’s society a wider interpretation of diversity is needed. Representation of diversity is no longer just about culture, gender norms and skin colour, but diversity in every walk of life: ability/disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or other identities (Ghezai, 2021).

Norwegian students will likely be able to find some form of representation of themselves, their friends in class or in their local community, or globally, presented in the chapters when it comes to culture, gender, skin colour, ability or disability, even if it is only through illustrations of a diverse group of children. This really should be expected in this day and age, especially when thinking of the insides of classrooms in eastern Oslo.

There is no representation of sexual orientation in the three chapters. This may be because the chapters are from level six primary school books, but this is not a good enough reason, because the topic of puberty is addressed in Natural science in primary schools. LK-20 states in Competence aims after year 7 in the Natural science curriculum that "The pupil is expected to be able to... ..explain physical and mental changes during puberty and talk about how these can affect emotions, actions and sexuality." (Udir, 2020d). Moreover, while few six-grade students have identified their own sexual orientation this early, primary schools mark the Pride festival, as a support to the LGBTQ community which is subjected to discrimination and harassment around the world for having a different sexual orientation. Some students have friends or family members identifying as LGBTQ, and may find them silenced. Another reason may be because the environmental topic of the chapters does not lend itself easily to this discussion or the limited number of chapters in this study. Representing diversity is of course not solely the responsibility of English teachers, but it is important to have this representation wherever possible. If everyone is to be included and valued in schools, and safe spaces for all students are to be created in the classroom, issues of gender and sexual orientation should also have a place in the curriculum. Silencing only enhances the negativity and intolerance of the subject in matter and erases the existence of some of our students (Ghezai, 2021). A review of a full textbook or even the full range of textbooks from a publisher, covering 5th to 7th year, might give a different result. Again, this is beyond the scope of this study.

Norwegian students will find little representation of Norway as a country in these chapters - there are facts and stories from all over the world, but *Quest 6* is the only chapter that presents Norway in some form: the story of Thor - the Thunder God, and the bee hotels and beehives in Oslo in "A Highway for Bees". The only representation of Norway in the chapter in *Explore 6* is that the reader is told that the initial pages of nature images are selected by Norwegian children. They all appear to be photographs from elsewhere. It is pertinent to ask why no images from Norway were included or whether any were made available for selection. Norway has so much spectacular nature on offer that tourists praise: the fjords, Preikestolen, Trolltunga,

the cod fishing in Lofoten, the small red fishing cabins that nowadays mostly are used by tourists, the Arctic areas in Northern Norway with the midnight sun and the corresponding period of darkness in the winter - the list could be made much longer.

When it comes to the discussion on the effects on human activity on nature, again, the representation of Norway is minimal. Topics closer to home could include the rapidly retreating glaciers, the risk of mudslides and avalanches, pollution of the sea by oil or plastic, the genetics of wild salmon threatened by escaped fish from salmon farms.

The expressions about weather - “weather sayings”, as the book calls them - that are presented on page 149 in *Explore 6* could equally well include some Norwegian examples as well, such as the contrasting proverbs about if the rowan tree had plenty of berries, the following winter would not have much snow, as the tree should not need to carry heavily twice (both the berries and the snow). Then again, other parts of Norway have exactly the opposite saying: rowan trees with many berries forecast a lot of snow in winter. Both might be true in the area where the proverbs originated.

In the “Kids can make a difference!” on pages 159-160 in *Explore 6*, there are no Norwegian or Scandinavian children mentioned, even though Norwegian students are aware of the environmental problems the globe is facing, and are active both on their own in their spare time, at school and as members of organised groups such as Miljøagentene (the environment agents) and activities like Batterijakten (The battery hunt).

*Engelsk 6* presents (pp. 144-157) three North American national animals, where the bison is considered an endangered species and the bald eagle was declared as endangered in 1967. Alternatively, Norwegian species could have been represented here, like the red-listed puffin, the musk ox or the Norwegian national bird, the white-throated dipper. The presentation of the brown bear in the text mentions explicitly the threat they are exposed to due to the diminishing areas of wilderness they depend on. The connection between indigenous people, the wild animals and their need for wide areas of nature could have been explored through the Sami people and their flocks of reindeer, moving from different grazing areas through the year.

However, there is a risk of generalisation when using the example of the Sami people, as not all of them herd reindeer, just as the *Engelsk 6* textbook connects the quotes from the Arapaho people and the totem poles, which was not a plains tribes tradition.

The hurricane stories in “Climate and living” (*Engelsk 6*, pp. 158-171) present three families on the other side of the world fleeing an approaching hurricane. If it is to reflect on the LK-20 “Respect for nature and environmental awareness” intended learning aim on how human activity affects the environment, the texts make no mention of the causes of climate change. A similar set of stories could be presented closer to home that reflects the students in current Norwegian classrooms and people that would have to flee and seek refuge somewhere else, even though it is rare that weather conditions in Norway are extreme enough to the authorities advising people to evacuate. In general, the advice is on the lines of “Stay safe indoors. Do not drive anywhere if you can avoid it.” In Norway, students would be familiar with blocked roads due to snowstorms, avalanches or slides and trees felled by storms, and cancelled flights or boat travel because of the weather conditions. As mentioned earlier, the modern media world makes it virtually impossible to avoid information about disasters elsewhere in the world, even if they may have been lucky enough to not experience it first-hand. A collection of stories of children having to leave their home country and move to Norway due to war, political or religious persecution, famine or flood might have a better chance to connect with Norwegian students in a multicultural classroom.

“Curious minds” (*Engelsk 6*, pp. 172-185) presents three cartoon kids, none of them with the stereotypical “Nordic” blond hair. Norway is represented by Niels Henrik Abel, but other candidates could be great explorers like Thor Heyerdahl, Nansen and Amundsen, the Vikings of old, scientists like Kristian Birkeland and Sam Eyde or even the married couple that were awarded the Nobel prize in medicine: May-Britt and Edvard Moser. The airline Norwegian has portraits of famous Norwegian explorers among others on the tails of their planes. Including a sample of this would again position the students as explorers of their own country and its history. “Tomorrow’s scientists” speaks directly to the reader, so Norwegian students are included by default.

“Read and enjoy” (*Engelsk 6*, pp. 186-191) positions the reader in the Outer Hebrides. The story has the advantage of being an authentic piece of English writing, but a story of anything Norwegian would position the reader closer to home. This could be about Heyerdahl’s Kon-Tiki or Ra expeditions or, perhaps more controversially due to fines for violating environmental provisions, Jarle Andhøy’s expeditions with his ship, Berserk. Other options could be, to name a few, samples of traditional Norwegian folklore, such as the story about

why Torghatten has a hole in it, how the canyon Jutulhogget was the result of a stroke from a giant's axe, or an old Viking fairytale.

Judging from these three chapters, Norway as a country could be better represented. Textbooks used in Norwegian classrooms should be trying to actively put Norway on the map. This would support both the LK-20 concept of interdisciplinary activities and positioning the students as explorers inside their own country, both making them aware and proud of what their country has to offer, but also enabling them to present Norway to visitors - creating young advocates for Norway. Furthermore, being able to identify oneself in the illustrations and stories used in the lessons not only strengthens the reader as a person, but gives him or her a sense of belonging, the tools to live an independent life, the skills to be a critical thinker, and generally improves one's welfare and that of society at large. The three textbooks could represent Norway more effectively when presenting the reader with the same - or similar - topics.

*How do English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools represent the various countries and communities presented in the texts?*

Looking at the three chapters, there is no sufficient data available to answer the research question about how countries and communities are represented. *Explore 6* has short texts that are presented as facts, but the persons presented in the chapter are real, everyday people from various countries. Italy is represented by historical Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius, USA by the Mount St. Helens eruption and the boy from Ohio, Erek Hansen. Indonesia is presented as being the home of orangutans and of two recycling sisters from Bali and Australia as the home of two brothers. The shortness of the texts may exclude finer details. *Engelsk 6* presents American wildlife in a factual manner, three fictional children in a nameless American town, a famous scientist and his fictional character, George, and his environmental-friendly parents, and an everyday, fictional boy in the Outer Hebrides. The main theme in *Quest 6* is USA, and the chapter presents the image of sunny California, depicts a teenager inside in her room on a rainy day, re-tells the story about Thor, the Norse thunder god, and portrays the Vikings in a positive manner from a Scandinavian perspective, fictional characters on a nameless airport somewhere in the USA, three American extreme tourist destinations, a small town in Alabama after being hit by a hurricane, and bee-hives in Oslo, designed by Snøhetta.

LK-20 states in Competence aims and assessment after year 7 that "The pupil is expected to be able to"... "investigate ways of living and traditions in different societies in the English-speaking world and in Norway and reflect on identity and cultural belonging" (Udir, 2020b).

The analysed chapters offer some information about individuals in the English-speaking world, without any discernible pattern, but virtually nothing about ways of living and the traditions in different societies in Norway. A study of the entire contents of one book might provide a better answer.

*Do current English textbooks used in Norwegian upper primary schools support the development of Critical Literacy skills, and if so, in what way?*

Supporting development of CL skills may happen on two levels: the textbook itself offering texts and tasks that invite, or even provoke, the students to engage in CL activity on their own volition, or offering suitable texts for the teacher to use in her CL work with the class. As Vasquez says, CL needs to be lived, and all texts may be read critically, but one cannot conclude that all collections of texts are equally suited to heightening the students' CL awareness. A textbook offering multiple texts on the same topic, preferably from different positions or offering opposite views, may help the teacher in her CL work, as she will not have to look for additional texts elsewhere. On the other hand, several texts on similar topics may not necessarily promote CL activity in itself if they merely exist in parallel without directly influencing or contradicting each other.

None of the books ask the reader to read from a different position, or read again after having received additional information. Opposite views were mainly found in the illustration on the two starter pages in *Explore 6* (nature with wild animals opposed to a city with pollution and garbage) and in the illustration on the two starter pages in *Engelsk 6* (green grass with a totem pole, flowers and insects set against grey asphalt with cars, buses and an evacuation centre). The illustration on the two *Quest 6* starter pages may be viewed as opposite views (rain, tornado, scorching sun) or as illustrations of various forms of extreme weather. Beyond the starter spread in the three chapters, thought-provoking illustrations, texts, quotes and follow-up texts were found in several places in both *Engelsk 6* and *Quest 6* such as the Arapaho quote in *Engelsk 6* (p.144): "When we show our respect for other living things, they respond with respect for us" and the "Colors of the Wind" lyrics in *Quest 6* (p. 156).

Conflicting views are present in just one page in *Quest 6* - in the text “California Dreamin’” (p. 146), where the singer is torn between leaving or staying (“I’d be safe and warm if I was in L.A.”, “He knows I’m gonna stay”, “If I didn’t tell her I could leave today. California dreamin’ on such a winter’s day.”) Different perspectives are presented in *Engelsk 6* - the three children's experiences of the same hurricane, where Mario (p. 160-162) and Lena (pp. 163-165) go to relatives nearby and disappear when they leave their hometown, whereas Lola’s family has no relatives in the area and ends up at the local evacuation centre, where her story starts (pp. 166-171). They are all fleeing from the hurricane, but in different ways - Lola is the only one in a refugee position. The obvious challenge with the three hurricane texts from a CL perspective is that all of them must be read in order to get the full picture. The language is quite advanced in all three texts - the main difference is in the length of the texts, and the forward pointers in the illustrations require the ability to read between the lines. A level three student is offered more scope for CL thinking than a level one student.

*Explore 6* is the only book offering similar texts on the very same topic, even though the difference is in the depth of detail: The children portrayed in “Kids can make a difference” (the two Balinese sisters working to abolish plastic bags, the Australian brothers raising money in order to help saving orangutans and the boy in Ohio recycling old jeans and shoes) have already been presented in the three “In short” articles. Thus, the textbook is sending a signal to the reader that information may be presented in different ways - a basic CL principle.

As discussed earlier, modern CL-type language learning is about more than learning the vocabulary, pronunciation and the correct grammar - to become not merely a code breaker, but a meaning maker, a text user and a text analyser in Luke and Freebody’s model (Vasquez, 1999, pp 329-334), using all three dimensions in Green’s model - language, cultural and critical dimensions (Scull et al., 2013). The student should be aware of which position the text is written from (“What is this text trying to do to me?”, as Vasquez put it) and from which position he or she is reading it from. All texts position the reader, but if the only CL aspect present is whether the reader is positioned as observer or participant, as tourist abroad or at home, the text can hardly be said to stimulate CL activity. It may still be used, though, as all texts can be read critically, but then the job is left to the teacher.

Furthermore, on pp. 150-151 in *Quest 6*, the headlines are figures of speech: “Monkeying around”, “Sticky toes” - but no mention of this fact or any explanation of their figurative meaning. The texts themselves are literal, but there is a lost learning opportunity from a CL



perspective in exploring figurative language. The author uses the language to give the reader a better understanding of the text. The question is whether the teacher will use this opening the textbook offers, but is failing to follow up. That said, the titles used may just have been a coincidence, but because of the purpose of this study, the potential CL activity in exploring the contrast between headline and the accompanying text became obvious.

Even with texts available that may be used for CL activities, the teacher must be able to see the possibilities and grasp the moment when a student expresses an idea or asks a question. Ignoring the students' ideas or questions will restrict CL activity, just as Rose's teacher did when she completely ignored Rose's ideas and the creative aspect of the task she had given the class, trying to make Rose's drawing of the Chinese brother with stretchy legs conform to her own ideas and ideals of a good drawing (Comber & Nichols, 2004).

Students claim they learn much of their English outside of the classroom, because they then are actively pursuing their own interests. CL activity, according to Vasquez, means creating space for these interests and everyday issues the students are concerned about, but at the same time, she says it is important to avoid co-opting their interests outside of the classroom. She states that the initiative must come from the students themselves. The "Recycle rap" in *Explore 6* (pp. 162-163) is bringing a musical genre popular with the students into the classroom, which is good. The textbook is attempting to connect with their daily life and their concerns about the planet's future due to the threat to the environment. However, it also runs the risk of making rap less interesting or even boring, as a private spare time interest now has become part of the syllabus.

The chapters do not contain any mention of power and motives, but then one should not expect a textbook to attempt to discredit its own contents. The textbook is itself a part of an existing power structure - the school discourse, and not every student is equally comfortable in this secondary discourse. Moreover, textbooks have traditionally been seen as an authority, and reading *against* the texts presented may be difficult, especially if the teacher views the textbook as the most important tool in the classroom, trusting the authors to cover all aims in the curriculum. Texts that seemingly present the reader with facts may be viewed as more authoritative than lyrics or fiction, and harder to read against, as shown when students were presented with the same text, but half were told that it was a biography, and the other half that it was fictional. The result was that they read the text in totally different ways. (Feldman and Kalmar, 1996, referenced in Kleve and Penne, 2011). This is in accordance with general CL

theory: that a text is read differently by different readers, due to each reader's prior knowledge, views and discourse.

In *Explore 6* (pp. 150-151), the tropical rainforest presented is represented by images of animals and plants and some very short texts on each photograph. The pages assume that "the tropics" are already known to the reader, but what the reader will be able to get out of these texts will to a large degree depend on the reader's prior knowledge of tropical rainforests. Students that know next to nothing about tropical rainforests beforehand, will have a generic idea of tropical rainforests and some associated words and phrases needed to create their own texts. Depending on which animal they decide to find more information about in order to prepare a mini-talk, they might deduce that tropical rainforests are to be found in South East Asia or Central or South America. A more knowledgeable reader might question the omission of the world's second largest tropical rainforest and its plants and animals, and also the failure to mention the problem with deforestation of rainforests. Considering that the chapter is titled "Saving our planet", it should not be too much to ask for a single sentence on this topic.

In fairness, the next two pages ("The people of the forest", pp. 152-153) explicitly mention that the orangutans' habitat is being cut down and that they are an endangered species, but then the problem of rainforest deforestation might be read as a specific problem in Borneo and Sumatra as opposed to a general problem for rainforests all over the world. A single mention of deforestation on the pages devoted to tropical rainforests in general on the preceding pages would reduce the risk of such an interpretation.

The author and the textbook texts appear as dominant, as the texts are presented as facts in the traditional school discourse. The author chooses not only what language that should be used in presenting the facts, but also what the important facts about the rainforest that the students should know are. Having access to the school discourse and language, the students only gain access to the facts that the texts offer them. The students are asked to redesign (even though it is on the author's premises: "Choose one of the animals on page 150-151. Find more information about the animal you have chosen and prepare a mini-talk.") The students are not presented with any real incentive to redesign any of the texts beyond that, as they are not given access to information that could problematise the information presented and omitted about the tropical rainforests - if their only source of information about the rainforests are these pages. A reader in a different school discourse, such as already having some beforehand knowledge of where rainforests are located and what challenges they are facing will be more likely to

question the idyllic and exotic version presented here. There is no diversity involved, apart from the different species presented.

Reading both with and against the texts in the textbook without having any additional information available - either as prior knowledge or as opposing or contrasting texts - will become virtually impossible, as the author does not present any potential challenges or problems. The texts are presented as facts, not opinions. Nevertheless, if the teacher provides her students with any additional texts that presents the location of the world's largest rainforests, typical animals in those habitats and the rapid deforestation of rainforests, this could prove an effective CL exercise in the classroom.

“Colors of the Wind (Pocahontas)” (*Quest 6*, pp. 158-159) includes an illustration from the Disney film and the name of the film itself, thus limiting the scope of the reader's interpretation of the text. The first verse is also omitted. This again illustrates that the author and the publisher are in a position of power. Again, access to the school discourses is needed in order to read the text (and the story of Pocahontas presented earlier in the textbook), but there are several additional layers of discourses and prior knowledge and views of the world around us involved: whether the reader has seen the movie or not, have read more about the historical Pocahontas and her life, the reader's general stance on indigenous people and their supposedly closer contact with nature and on the old-fashioned European view that the Europeans were the most advanced representatives of humanity, not only technologically, but also culturally and morally. The sum of these discourses will decide whether reading *with* or *against* the text proves to be easier. Someone with a romantic view of indigenous people and their connection with all things, lifeless of living will read the lyrics from a different perspective than someone with knowledge or experience of colonisation mindsets. A reader that has little experience with the Disneyfication of known histories and fairytales (if such a person still exists in this day and age) will read from yet another perspective.

There may be several reasons why there is a concept of a canon of literature - “the classics” that everyone in a society is supposed to read. One reason is to establish a common frame of reference in the society, another is that those stories are thought to present universal and timeless human problems and challenges, and thus may be of value to the coming generations. It is questionable whether the story of Pocahontas belongs in any official list of literary canons, but the Disney movie will probably be included in children's idea of a modern canon. It would serve as a common reference point over large parts of the world, so it makes sense to use

excerpts from it in a textbook. The first verse is omitted in the textbook for some reason, where Pocahontas says in the original version that the person she is speaking to thinks she is just an ignorant savage, and as he is so widely travelled, it might be so - but that she cannot understand that she is the savage, when there are so much he does not know. Perhaps the word “savage” was considered too brutal. Perhaps the contrast between the Native Americans and the European representative of colonialism became too stark. Only the authors may say for certain.

The tasks in the three chapters in this study do not invite the students to question the texts presented, but beyond the comprehension questions ask them to explain their contents, reflect on their meanings, expand on the knowledge presented or present one’s own thoughts on the topic. There are some evaluate/re-tell/re-write tasks, but they do not question the texts. In effect, the texts are not meant to be questioned, but used as a base for further activity, which may include CL aspects like the students being active knowledge makers.

All three chapters contain some pre-reading tasks that ask about the students’ prior knowledge and experiences, and some post-reading redesign tasks, which is a step beyond traditional reading comprehension and vocabulary tasks. The tasks range from vocal discussion with a learning partner (“Continue the dialogue. Will they be stuck at the airport, or will they celebrate Christmas with Uncle Dave and Aunt Betty? Role-play the dialogue with the new ending”. *Quest 6*, p. 153) to making a three-minute podcast (*Speak up!*, *Engelsk 6*, p.192). The CL principle that any text produced or read/re-written by the students should have a real-life addressee, ideally outside of the classroom, is limited to addressing the students’ learning partner, classmates or, in some instances, their families. There are also some “find out more about” tasks that allow the students to be active knowledge makers and re-creators, but the CL activity principle of teachers being learners alongside the students is absent. The joint learning project is not impossible using any of these books as a starting point, but the three chapters suggest a more traditional way of working in the classroom. In sum, there are a few texts in all three chapters that may trigger CL-type thinking without the teacher having to invite to a discussion or add additional material. Some texts are an excellent starting-point for a CL activity, but are let down by follow-up tasks that do not ask for CL-type thinking.

It is interesting to notice the differences between the stated learning aims in each chapter and what the chapter then actually presents to the reader in order to be able to reach the aims. *Explore 6* states that the learning aims are: “In this chapter you will learn about nature and forces of nature, to collect and organise information for writing fact texts, about taking care of

the environment and about nouns in plural and uncountable nouns” (*Explore 6*, p. 139, my translation, as original aims are in Norwegian). The only force of nature mentioned is volcanoes, apart from the word thunderstorm appearing twice together with a cartoon where a bolt of lightning strikes the ground. The environmental aspect is dominated by the reduce, reuse and recycle concept, as the only mention of negative effects of human activity on the environment otherwise is the fact that orangutans are an endangered species because their habitat - the rainforest - is cut down in order to provide space for producing palm oil: “growing palm oil”, as the chapter puts it. *Engelsk 6* has different learning aims for each sub-chapter: “Animals in the wild”’s learning aims are: “Learn to talk about sports and other interests, to listen and read about wild and domestic animals, to find facts and learn from texts that you read and to talk about indigenous people” (*Engelsk 6*, p. 145). The wild animals are covered in depth, but domestic animals are mentioned only once, as the reader is told that bison were infected with diseases from domestic cattle. The indigenous people are represented by an Arapaho quote, two images of totem poles and the phrase “American Indian reservations” and that “The bison is also an ancient symbol among the Native American nations from the plains.” There is not much information available for the students to be able to talk about Native Indians, or any other indigenous people. Sports are not mentioned at all. The “Climate and living” sub-chapter’s learning aims are: “Learn to talk about the Earth and the environment, to ask questions correctly and to retell a story” (*Engelsk 6*, p. 159). The environmental aspect is three stories about the same hurricane, told from three different children’s perspectives, and two short fact boxes that explains the word hurricane and its etymological origin and that climate change has resulted in stronger winds and more extreme weather. There is no mention about what - or who - has caused this climate change. The learning aims in “Curious minds” are: “Learn to ask questions about things you are curious about, to reflect on different topics and to express your meanings” (*Engelsk 6*, p. 173), and the texts and tasks cover those aims adequately. The *Quest 6* chapter’s learning aims state: “In this chapter, I will talk about how weather affects our lives, read texts about extreme weather, sing songs about weather and nature and discuss the effects of human life on nature” (*Quest 6*, p. 145). The extreme weather topic is covered by a text about a blizzard shutting down an airport and two texts about tornadoes, and songs to be sung are presented, but the only mention of the effects of human life on nature is the positive angle of building insect hotels. Possible negative effects of human activities on nature - such as the negative effects of flying or extreme tourism - are not mentioned at all.

The three chapters are all organised in a manner where a level three student also needs to read the level one and two texts in order to obtain the information about a subtopic. The information is not offered in parallel with differences in text length, language complexity and depth of detail, so that a level three reader may skip the lower levels and head straight for the level three texts. In effect, the entire chapter would be compulsory reading for a level three student. Any ‘deep learning’ activity will not be choosing which texts to read and work with, but in the form of finding additional information elsewhere. There is some freedom of choice in the tasks, but not in the texts themselves for the level three student. Do the level one or two students have some freedom of choice with regard to the texts? They would have to choose additional texts intended for a higher level, and may find their language skills a challenge. Nevertheless, this may be thought of as a form of “deep learning”, and they may also find additional information elsewhere. The chapters do not appear as the new, different type of textbook described earlier, with more texts than necessary, covering topics from several perspectives and thus offering a degree of freedom in choosing which texts to read and work with. Looking at the texts and tasks included in the three chapters that all had weather, climate changes and the effects of human activity on the environment as topics, it is surprising to find nothing about the cause of climate change and sustainable development in any of the chapters. Also, the chapters are different with regard to the cohesion of the texts included in each chapter. One would expect that texts in a chapter or subchapter would have a degree of relation to the other texts as well as the topic - the opposite would be an apparently random selection of texts that may be loosely connected to the same topic, but not to the text coming directly before or after. *Engelsk 6* appears the most cohesive - several texts are presented on the same sub-topic, and expand on the previous text. *Explore 6* also provides this to a certain degree, while *Quest 6* appears as the most fragmented with only two sets of two texts that can be said to be topically connected. A summary of the findings and the conclusion will be presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter 4: Conclusion

## 4.1: Introduction

In the earlier chapters, general CL theory and the challenges of doing CL activities in a second language has been presented and discussed. The analysis method and the selection of chapters in the books has been presented, and the findings have been presented and discussed. In this chapter, a brief summary of the importance of CL ability in English in Norway is presented, followed by a short answer to whether English textbooks in Norwegian upper primary schools help develop students' Critical Literacy skills and some suggestions for improvement in future textbooks. Then, a review of possible weaknesses in the study and suggestions for further studies, and lastly final words.

## 4.2: The importance of Critical Literacy in English classes in Norwegian classrooms

This study has argued that CL activity should occur whenever the teacher finds the space for it, regardless of the subject taught, and as English has such an important position in the life of Norwegian students both at school and outside of it, this should be the case in English classes as well. The teachers and students should be researchers, learning together and finding improvements and solutions (Comber, 2013b). The students need to have enough language competency to discuss, explain, interpret and read between the lines of the text in question, and experience with CL principles in Norwegian as well. As mentioned earlier, the difference in expected language skills in the English curriculum compared to the curriculum aims for the other foreign languages curriculum suggests that CL activity in English classes is possible, provided the chosen text is accessible for the students in terms of relevance, language complexity and their prior knowledge. The three chapters analysed in this study have texts intended for students on different levels, so one does not necessarily need to engage in CL activity based on the more complex texts.

The teacher must be qualified in the subject taught, but also be able to help the students read both the word and the world. This is an important skill for anyone in a modern society, no matter which language they use. In a world of Global Englishes, where one is likely to interact

with other non-native speakers as well as native speakers, approximating a native accent like UK Received Pronunciation (RP) should be of less importance compared to mastering effective communication and being aware of the relations between language and power structures. In order to be an accomplished language user, one should be able to not only understand the surface content of the text, but also understand why it has been framed in exactly such a way and, if necessary, re-write it to better fit its purpose. In a similar manner, an accomplished language user should be able to shape their own oral or written texts to convey the intended meaning with a specific audience in mind. In order to accomplish this, texts must be analysed from different angles.

As stated earlier, many teachers use the textbook as the main teaching tool. There may be several reasons for this, one of which may be that teachers that do not feel comfortable with general discussions in English may focus on the basics - text reading and comprehension. Whatever the reason, it reinforces the textbook's position of authority, making it harder to read against and question - a hindrance rather than help with regard to CL activity. In order to avoid this, the teacher must analyse, adjust and supplement topics and activities as necessary, based on her students' needs and prior knowledge. This is important both when it comes to improving their language skills and their CL abilities. Those students who are mainly meeting school from their primary discourse, not yet being fully comfortable with the secondary school discourse that textbooks are a part of, need help to develop the necessary meta-language and metacognition. Students being comfortable in the secondary school discourse are accepting that they are students and should be active learners. They have learned to play the school game. If the teachers are not helping the low-performing students develop the required meta-skills, the result may be an increasing knowledge gap between low-performing and high-performing students (Penne & Skarstein, 2015).

This study set out to examine whether English textbooks in Norwegian upper primary schools help develop students' Critical Literacy skills.

As Vasquez says, the aim is to engage children in texts they find problematic or unfair, to recognise everyday issues and try to do something about it, such as discussing alternatives or redesigns of problematic texts. The three chapters in this study contain very few conflicting or opposing texts or illustrations that have a different angle to the main story (Janks, 2009), largely position the reader as observer (apart from the "Curious minds" sub-chapter in *Engelsk* 6) and do not invite the reader to read from a different position. There are some create/re-



tell/rewrite/evaluate tasks, but students are not invited to question the contents of the texts themselves. The texts and tasks should of course create opportunities to enhance the students' English skills and allow them to tell fun or interesting stories, but the CL aspect could be better utilised.

The chapters offer some texts that may be the basis of CL activity, even though they are not followed up by CL-promoting tasks, and as a consequence will not trigger CL activity on their own. It is then up to the CL-conscious teacher to find the spaces for CL activity - asking the students to analyse the motives behind a potentially problematic text, redesign it or find alternatives. The teacher seeking to promote CL activity probably must introduce alternative, opposing or conflicting texts or ask leading questions: "Do you see anything strange/missing/unfair in this text? Why do you think it is written that way?" When texts require that the teacher must prompt the students or bring in additional texts in order to provide spaces for CL activity, the textbook texts do not promote CL activity on their own. In short, judging from these three chapters, the textbooks contain texts that may help a CL-conscious teacher develop students' CL skills, but not all of them offer obvious spaces for CL activity, enabling the teacher to develop those skills using the textbook as the primary resource. These chapters may be used in a CL-style joint learning project where teachers are learning together with the students if the teacher wishes, but they may equally well be used in a traditional top-down teaching manner by teachers that still have remnants of the banking school mindset, viewing students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. It is fair to say that none of the books are written with CL in mind.

### 4.3: Suggestions for improvements in future books

English textbooks are written first and foremost in order to help the teacher improve the students' language skills, supplying the students with suitable texts and tasks. There should be variation in complexity and length, variation in the topics presented, written with an ability to engage, and creating spaces for CL activities would be welcome. Engaging without co-opting the students' interests is a challenge. Avoiding their interests altogether may lead to uninteresting topics, including their interests may reduce them to obligatory classroom activity. In a world with a multitude of information instantly available through the internet, even the best textbook texts may come across as uninspiring in comparison. Students comfortable in the secondary school discourse would probably object less to this, compared to those who meet

school primarily from their primary discourse. Textbooks with complex language may or may not prove beneficial to honing language skills, depending on the language skills of the students. They may prove an obstacle to CL work, though, as it will be harder to fully grasp the surface message of a text in order to look beyond, searching for hidden agendas. Simpler texts may prove more suitable to CL work, and depending on the level of English the students in a particular class are comfortable with, also more suitable for improving their language skills. Ideally, a textbook should present both simple and complex texts on the same topic.

With regard to CL activity in English, textbooks should include multiple texts, with both simple and complex language, on a similar topic that partially oppose or contradict each other, suggesting that there is more than one side to a story, and that it may be presented in different ways. Ideally, the textbook should also present more texts and topics than actually needed, allowing teachers and students to unselect topics or texts. The textbook will probably still be positioned as an authority in the classroom for a long time to come, by teachers, students and parents alike, but it should nevertheless be possible to present the students with texts that imply that not every text in the book is equally authoritative.

In many communities in Norway, particularly in the larger cities, many students have backgrounds from other countries and previous experience with various forms of Englishes. This may suggest that the teacher should be aware of a possible difference in their oral language skills and their ability to decode a written/printed text in standard English. It also may suggest, bearing in mind that English is commonly used as a lingua franca, that authors of future English textbooks should include authentic samples of Global Englishes, both in the textbooks and in accompanying digital resources, suggesting that English for non-native speakers primarily is intended for communication and that one may be fluent without having a native accent. This study has not looked at the digital resources accompanying the current textbooks, but one would hope that a broad palette of Global Englishes are presented in future editions.

Future textbooks could also focus on the difference in idioms in Norwegian and Global Englishes: enabling students to understand the finer nuances in the variation of language in use. Which ones are translatable, which ones are totally different in wording, but carry the same meaning, which ones are not standard UK or US English, but word-by-word translation of an idiom originally expressed in another language? What meaning would a Norwegian student glean from the Indian “My teacher is sitting on my head”?

Building further on the concept of English as being primarily a communication tool, one could suggest that students also to a larger degree should be positioned at home as hosts to visitors from abroad, tasking them with explaining Norwegian places, history, customs and traditions in English to a foreigner.

#### 4.4: Possible weaknesses in the study

Finding three similarly sized chapters that treated comparable topics in the same depth and breadth proved difficult. Choosing another selection method (first or last chapter, the pages in the third quarter of each book and other possible selection methods) might have given a different outcome, but using three chapters with comparable topics appeared to be the best approach. Comparing three chapters with totally different topics appeared to simultaneously include the risk of the authors approaching and presenting the topics in an even more different manner than what proved to be the case in the selected chapters.

This study was limited to one chapter from each textbook. It is entirely possible that other chapters in the three books offered more CL-supporting or even CL-promoting texts and tasks. Comparing the three books in their entirety, or analysing just one full book might give a different result, but would require a study with an entirely different scope.

Likewise, not every sixth-year English textbook was available for this study, neither were every accompanying workbook and teacher's guide. It is difficult to know whether this was because the different publishers originally had different progress plans for their series of textbooks or whether the pandemic played any part - having access to other physical copies of books and other materials for this study proved difficult. Nevertheless, analysing more books would change the scope of the study.

The study does not include any voices from the classroom. No teachers or students have been interviewed, neither on first thoughts before using the textbook, nor on their impressions after active use in the classroom. However, this would have been an entirely different study, with different methodology.

The three chapters turned out to have different expectations of the students' language competence, where *Engelsk 6* in general used longer and more complex texts than *Explore 6* and *Quest 6*, and as *Engelsk 6* had only four chapters compared to seven in *Explore 6* and six in

*Quest 6*, the analysed chapter from *Engelsk 6* was proportionally a larger part of the book. However, this does not necessarily mean that there should be differences in how many CL-promoting texts and tasks each chapter could offer, but rather that longer and more complex texts would require more language skills from the students.

A different methodology may have given different results. As mentioned earlier, analysing the contents of textbooks in a qualitative manner is not a straightforward process. There appeared to be no standard approach that would fit the study's CL focus. Thus, a CL-supporting set of analysis categories was developed for the study. It is possible that refining the categories even more would affect the analysis, the findings and the resulting conclusion.

As stated, qualitative analysis of textbooks is a subjective process. Another researcher may find texts and tasks in these chapters that they interpret as more or less CL-supportive. However, a colleague with knowledge of CL theory and CL principles, performed a similar analysis of the three chapters with the categories used, and came to similar conclusions regarding CL-supporting texts and tasks in the three books, particularly the absence of opposing or contrasting texts.

## 4.5: Suggestions for further studies

One possible way forward may be to gather more material: analysing one full book, with accompanying workbook, teacher's guide and digital resources - or even three books from the same publisher: fifth, sixth and seventh grade. Another suggestion would be observing how one of the books is put to use in the classroom, together with interviews with teachers and students. Yet another study could include interviews with teachers: How do they study a text in class? How do they approach CL activity in their class? Do they regard CL skills in English classes an equally essential part of the classroom activities as in other subjects? What do they regard as challenges in the English classes with regard to CL activity? How will the focus on "deep learning" and the transitioning from printed textbooks to multimodal, online teaching materials influence the CL activities in the classroom?

## 4.6: Final words

This study has tried to shed some light on potential openings for CL activity in English textbooks. In order to do this, five different research questions have been used to examine

potentially CL-enhancing content in the textbooks, both the texts themselves and accompanying tasks. The reasoning behind this is both that the new LK-20 curriculum calls for CL skills, but also because English has become such an important factor in the modern Norwegian society, and that the students, viewed as a group, are different today compared to merely twenty years ago. As society changes, so must the school, and so should textbooks as well. An attempt has been made to discern how the authors of present-day English textbooks have opened up spaces for CL activity in English classes. Although English across the years of primary school has less than half the hours allotted to mathematics and less than a third of the hours of Norwegian, the difference is less pronounced in the three upper primary years: 228 hours of English, 328 hours of mathematics and 441 hours of Norwegian. English as a language is increasingly important in Norway, both in the educational system as well as in the students' activities outside school. With the emergence of "fake news" and "alternative facts" the students need tools for examining the myriads of facts available to them and deciding what to believe and what to disregard. History is being written and rewritten every day: war, famine, political, economical and religious conflicts result in refugees. Some make the headlines and spread over the world media, others do not. Society and societies change, as do discourses. Some changes are rapid, others happen slowly, and as Janks has shown, leaving a discourse behind and embracing a more modern discourse may be difficult. In the school system, the curricula and the textbooks have a narrative role, and updating them is a slow process. Therefore, it stands to reason that CL ability in English is an important skill, and creative English lessons where the students are challenged to develop and sharpen their CL skills will help them become literate and valuable members of the society, both today and in the future.

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## Appendix 1: Sample analysis table

A: *Contrasting views*. Does the textbook present any set of two or more conflicting or opposite views? The same story from several perspectives? Or will the teacher have to supplement the textbook with additional material? Are the students asked to read from another position?

No findings = the teacher will need to supplement with other texts.

<b>Contrasting views</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Opposite views			
Conflicting views			
Perspectives			
Read from other position			
Thought-provoking			

B: *Perspective & Position*. How are the students mainly positioned by the textbook? Tourist or local, observer or participant?

<b>Perspective &amp; Position</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Tourist			
Home			
Greeting a visitor			
Observer			
Participant			
Marginalized/privileged position			
Reader's position			

C: *Diversity & Voice*. Who is presented, who is omitted? Do the textbooks represent their Norwegian readers? How are the countries and communities presented? Are samples of Global Englishes presented?

<b>Diversity &amp; Voice</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Presented: (stereotypes, gender, ethnicity, preferences)			
Omitted: (stereotypes, gender, ethnicity, preferences)			
Home or abroad			
Tourist attraction or daily life			
Global English samples			

D: *Experience & Redesign*. Are the students asked to rewrite or redesign a text?

<b>Experience &amp; redesign</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Asked to read from another position (e.g. boy vs girl)			
Asked to re-read after receiving more information			
Asked to create			
Asked to rewrite			
Asked to re-tell			
Asked to evaluate			

E: *Power and motives*. Do the textbooks suggest or show in any way that a text tries to position the reader? That there is an underlying agenda? That no text is wholly neutral, and neither is the reader?

<b>Power and motives</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Suggestions that texts are trying to influence			
Dominant/silenced			
What is the intention of the text?			

## Appendix 2: Hours per subject in Norwegian schools

Tabell 1 Ordinær fag- og timefordeling for elever på 1.-10.trinn skoleåret 2021-2022<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2 Ordinær fag- og timefordeling

Fag- og timefordelingen i tabell 1 gjelder for alle som ikke skal ha spesiell fag- og timefordeling (jf. punkt 2.3 og 2.4).

Fag/trinn	1.-4. trinn	5.-7. trinn	Sum	8.-10. trinn	Sum grunn- skole
KRLE			427	153	580
Norsk	931	441	1372	398	1770
Matematikk	560	328	888	313	1201
Naturfag	187	179	366	249	615
Engelsk	138	228	366	222	588



<b>Fremmedspråk / fordypning/arb eidslivsfag</b>	0	222	222
<b>Samfunnsfag</b>	385	249	634
<b>Kunst og håndverk</b>	477	146	623
<b>Musikk</b>	285	83	368
<b>Mat og helse</b>	114	83	197
<b>Kroppsøving</b>	478	223	701
<b>Valgfag<sup>3</sup></b>	0	171	171
<b>Utdanningsvalg</b>	0	110	110
<b>Fleksibel time</b>	38	0	38

<b>Fysisk aktivitet</b>	0	76	76	0	76
<b>Samlet minstetimetall</b>			<b>5272</b>	<b>2622</b>	<b>7894</b>

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<sup>2</sup> Skoleeier kan omdisponere inntil 5 prosent av timetallet i fag til andre fag, jf. punkt 2.1.1. Elevene har fremdeles rett til det samlede totale minstetimetallet.

<sup>3</sup> Timetallet i valgfag skal fordeles med 57 timer på hvert trinn.

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