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| **Intern sensor:** | Zoltan Varga | | |

## Student

| | |
|---|---|
| **Navn:** | Lydia Kristin Furnes |
| **Kandidatnr.:** | 110 |
| **HiB-Id:** | h143382@hib.no |

## Informasjon fra deltaker

**Jeg godkjenner avtalen om** Valgt
**tilgjengeliggjøring av**
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**BORA:**

HØGSKOLEN
I BERGEN

BERGEN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

# Decentering and fiction: on developing intercultural competence using a picturebook in a Norwegian L2 Classroom

A study of how, in light of intercultural theory, the picturebook "The Soccer Fence" by Phil Bildner can be seen to serve as a teaching tool to develop the ability to decenter.

Desentrering og skjønnlitteratur: utvikling av interkulturell kompetanse gjennom bruk av en bildebok i det norske andrespråksklasserommet

En studie hvor bildeboken "The Soccer Fence" av Phil Bildner er brukt som et undervisningsverktøy for å utvikle evnen til å desentrere, sett i lys av interkulturell teori.

**Lydia Kristin Furnes**

Mentor: Anna Birketveit
Master of Educational Science / Master i Undervisningsvitenskap

Faculty of Education / Avdeling for lærerutdanning
Bergen University College

Date:  16 May 2016

# Acknowledgements

The current master's thesis has allowed me to research an area that I regard as highly important and socially relevant. Although it has been a long and demanding process, it has been thrilling and satisfying to see the result gradually unfold chapter by chapter. Hopefully, the topic and the results of the study can have implications for the intercultural teaching practices in today's Norwegian second language classroom.

I personally believe in the power of literature to engage, evoke emotional responses and make the reader reflect. The picturebook has become such a versatile genre in literature, and can reach readers at any age, and play on several different sources of information. Picturebooks on culture, such as *The Soccer Fence,* will hopefully make its case as a relevant genre in the EFL-classroom, introducing teachable and important topics in a child-friendly manner. It is my strong opinion that today's education requires more focus on intercultural competence, and developing our ability to see the world from the perspectives of others, to better understand each other is important.

I am very grateful to have been assigned Anna Birketveit as my mentor on this project. A huge thank you for thorough guidance through this entire project, for believing in my research and giving me constructive feedback. Also, a big thank you to Maren and Hanne who took time out of their busy schedule to sit down with me and assess the scoring system, as well as my wonderful participants, their teacher and the parental group. Thank you for making this research possible, and for being so positive to the project!

Writing this thesis has been challenging, but also such an enlightening process, indeed. Thanks to my boyfriend, Ole Kristian, flat mates, Elise and Veronika, family and friends, for keeping me positive and taking an interest in the thesis. Thank you for support, for listening and for praying. In addition, I wish to thank my co-students at Bergen University College, for feedback during sessions and for sharing thoughts and doubts.

Happy reading

Sincerely, a grateful master's student

# Abstract

The current master's thesis deals with trying out a teaching tool for developing decentering, an element within intercultural competence, in a 5th grade class using the picturebook *The Soccer Fence* (2014) by Phil Bildner. The focus is on how decentering is developed through an intervention process, in light of intercultural and sociocultural theory. Intercultural competence as a topic has received increasing attention within school politics in later years, emphasising the ability to change perspectives (decentering) in an increasingly ethnically diverse society.

Previous studies in the field of decentering have requested wider research. Investigation of the topic has generally taken place in clinical settings, within philosophy and social development, whereas decentering in an educational setting has yet to be researched. Thus, the main thesis question is: *How can the picturebook* The Soccer Fence *by Phil Bildner be used as a teaching tool to develop decentering in a Norwegian L2 classroom?* To further illustrate the thesis question, two research questions were formulated. The first question is: *Is there an increase in decentering scores after the second reading of the book?* This is the primary area of interest, and has been given the most attention. The second research question is supplemental, and was included to evaluate how the participants reacted to the topic and method of working: *What is the nature of the participants' responses to this teaching tool?*

To collect data, a one-group pretest posttest design was chosen. The pretest and posttest were directly succeeded by group interviews to support or challenge the findings, and the answers were compared to check for correspondence. The scores of each participant (N=21) were calculated using a paired samples t-test. In addition, in order to answer the second research question regarding the usefulness of the teaching tool in the classroom, field notes were used to document reactions observed during the intervention process.

The main findings of this study show that there was statistic significance in decentering scores from the pretest to the posttest on the < 0.01 level. In addition, the interviews showed full or partial correspondence with over 50% of the answers when compared to the test answers, even indicating that several participants possessed greater decentering skills than the tests showed. Decentering abilities were traceable even before the intervention, and were significantly improved over a three-week period.

# Abstrakt

Denne masteravhandlingen tar for seg et undervisningsverktøy for uviklingen av *desentrering*, et element innen interkulturell kompetanse i en 5. klasse gjennom bruken av bildeboken *The Soccer Fence* (2014) av Phil Bildner. Fokuset er på hvordan desentrering er utviklet gjennom en intervensjonsprosess, i lys av interkulturell og sosiokulturell teori. Interkulturell kompetanse er et tema som har fått økende oppmerksomhet i skolepolitikken de siste årene, med vekt på evnen til å endre perspektiver (desentrering) i et samfunn med økende etnisk mangfold.

Tidligere forskning på feltet om desentrering har etterlyst mer omfattende studier. Forskning på temaet har generelt funnet sted i kliniske omgivelser, filosofi og sosial utvikling, mens decentering i et utdanningsfelt har ennå ikke blitt undersøkt. Problemstillingen for avhandlingen er: *Hvordan kan bildeboken* The Soccer Fence *av Phild Bildner brukes som et undervisningsverktøy for å utvikle desentrering i et norskt andrespråksklasserom?* Denne problemstillingen blir belyst gjennom to forskningsspørsmål. Det første spørsmålet er: *Er det en økning i desentrering skårer etter den andre lesningen av boken?* Dette er hovedfokuset i studien og har blitt gitt mest oppmerksomhet. Det andre forskningsspørsmålet er komplementært og er inkludert for å evaluere hvordan deltagerne reagerte på temaet og metoden: *Hva er naturen av deltagernes respons på dette undervisningsverktøyet?*

For å samle inn data ble et enkeltgruppe pretest posttest-design valgt. Pretesten og posttesten ble direkte etterfulgt av gruppeintervjuer for å støtte eller utfordre funnene, og svarene ble sammenlignet for se om de korresponderte. Skårene til hver deltager (N=21) ble kalkulert gjennom en paret t-test. I tillegg, for å besvare det andre forskningsspørsmålet om undervisningsverktøyets brukbarhet i klasserommet ble feltnotater brukt for å dokumentere reaksjonene som ble observert under intervensjonsprosessen.

Hovedfunnene i denne studien viser at det var statistisk signifikans i desentrering skårer fra pretesten til pretesten på nivået $< 0.01$. I tillegg viste intervjuene full eller delvis korrespondanse på over 50% av svarene når de ble sammenlignet med testsvarene, og indikerte til og med at flere deltagere hadde høyere desentreringsferdigheter enn testene viste. Desentreringsferdigheter kunne spores selv før intervensjonen, og ble tydelig utviklet over en tre-ukers periode.

## List of tables and figures

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Abstract

Abstrakt

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Text: "The Soccer Fence"

**The march was slow.**

The next time I went to work with Mama,
I peeked over the fence.

"Can I play? I called.

Not a single boy looked my way.

---

Nelson Mandela loved sports.
He understood that they had the power to inspire and unite –
they could play a pivotal role in bringing
the country he loved closer together.

**(The Soccer Fence by Phil Bildner, 2014)**

# 1. Introduction

The development of intercultural competence is a growing topic of debate in Norwegian school politics. Schools are intended to educate the coming generations, and the ethnic diversity that has increased exponentially in the previous few decades, has set new demands as to the content of the education. The minority groups in the country have grown and multiplied, requiring an increase in intercultural understanding. The Norwegian society today is generally concerned with how to integrate new members into society in the best way possible. UNESCO emphasises that education has a particularly important role in "promoting social cohesion", and in developing healthy attitudes towards other cultures (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8). This involves empathy, tolerance, understanding, all aspects within Byram's theories on intercultural competence (Byram, 2008, p. 230). In 2008, the Norwegian government signed a cooperation agreement with the Council of Europe about establishing a resource centre, where one of the central goals was to train teachers in intercultural competence, human rights and democratic citizenship. The objective was to improve the capacity of the participants in an effort to equip schools to better educate their pupils in intercultural competence (MFA, 2008).

Some attitudes and behaviours within intercultural competence are emphasised by Wandel to be of special importance, namely the feeling of empathy and the ability to change perspectives (2002, p. 266). Meeting new cultures can be challenging, and understanding each other can be even harder. At the same time, it is a golden opportunity to discover how we think and how the environment we live in affects our thoughts and actions. It is in this realm that literature can play a valuable role in education, by challenging the reader to enter into unfamiliar situations, trying to emerge into the thoughts and feelings of the specific characters. Knowledge of how other people experience given situations, raises awareness of how important it can be to preserve the identity and traditions of new members of society. Thereby, it may also prevent new members of a society to unconditionally adapt to the existing norms and risk losing a part of themselves.

Generally, there is no lack of theory on intercultural competence, and research has been extensive on the topic in the wide sense. However, the narrow focus of this thesis is what is called *decentering*, originally labelled by Piaget when researching cognitive development. It is an element within intercultural competence, placed under what Byram calls *savoir être*, concerned with attitude and openness. Fincher defines it as "the ability to take

another person's perspective", and is necessary to be able to act appropriately in an intercultural context (2012, p.1). Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "to shift from an established center of focus" by "disconnecting from practical or theoretical assumptions" (Merriam-Webster). This area of intercultural competence is much less researched, more thoroughly explained in sub-chapter 1.1.2 below. Thus, with this context, the current topic of interest is exemplified and a teaching tool for how to develop the ability to decenter through the use of literature, is outlined.

## 1.1 Background, relevance and aims of the study

In the following section, the reason for the choice of topic, its relevance and the aims of the study, are accounted for. Subsequently, previous research on the topic is presented, as well as the general structure of the thesis.

When deciding the topic of this master's thesis, the researcher was a new teacher in a very ethnically diverse school in the Western part of Norway. She taught a primary school class where almost half of the pupils were either part Norwegian or not Norwegian at all, and thereby experienced the importance of intercultural competence first hand. The school where she worked paid great amounts of attention to the society's intercultural situation. They taught one of the few reception classes in the city, where new immigrants or refugees who recently arrived in the city started, some without knowing a single word of Norwegian, with the goal of learning basic skills and eventually entering into Norwegian-speaking classes. The need for understanding, tolerance, empathy and an ability to take fellow pupils' perspectives were clearly important in such a setting, and potentially researching this topic in my master's thesis received the interest and praise of both the parents and teachers of the school.

The increasing globalization makes the topic all the more relevant, placing the topic of the thesis within an important field in the educational development of today. A report explaining the situation in the Norwegian teacher education following the latest reform, emphasized that the multicultural perspective is insufficient in terms of recent research. It explains that 13,6% of children in today's Norwegian primary schools have immigrant backgrounds, which requires that new teachers should have knowledge of learning and development in multicultural contexts. However, very few of teacher students feel that they are equipped to face the intercultural classroom based on what they have learned when studying (FFL, 2015, pp. 109–111). Due to the insufficiency in research about the Norwegian intercultural context, I chose this as a focus of my thesis.

Statistics Norway (SSB) reports that as of January 2016, 698 000 immigrants and 149 700 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents live in Norway (SSB, 2016). This is an increase of over 40 000 in just one year, compared to 2015 statistics. The society we live in is a global society. However, knowledge *about* other cultures is not enough, nor can it be limited to experiences of the Norwegian people, because our everyday life clearly includes people from other parts of the world. The ethnic diversity among the participants in this study highlights just that; in a class of 22 pupils, almost half of them were either immigrants or Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. Our ability to understand each other, not just linguistically, but to understand each other's points of view, is vital for our society to work. The Department of Education, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET) and UNESCO are all examples of higher institutions that emphasise the importance of intercultural competence, with special emphasis on our ability to change perspectives and understand situations from different angles.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET) has explicitly formulated aims for the English subject regarding intercultural competence, about being able to use language appropriate to intercultural contexts (NDET, n.d., p. 8). It is highlighted that intercultural competence is a natural and necessary part of language competence, simply because English is used world wide (NDET, n.d., p. 2). Also within the curricular plan for foreign languages, NDET clearly states that an important intention is to train the pupils in intercultural and communicative competence (NDET, n.d., p. 1). When developing competence about other cultures, a necessity for the classroom subjects would arguably be the availability of relevant material and information. Wandel argues that cultural English teaching should not solely be based on the traditional countries and cultures such as the US or the United Kingdom, but must develop competence about other English-speaking countries and, with that, intercultural sensitivity (2002, p. 265). However, within the most widely used curricular English books in Norwegian primary school, there is a notable lack of literature and material regarding English-speaking countries other than the UK, US and Australia. The literature used in the classroom should be material that allows pupils to get to know a number of different perspectives and outlooks, that provokes discussions and expression of opinions (Wandel, 2002, p. 266). The cultural knowledge of Norwegian pupils can not be limited to static knowledge of a culture's population, capital, the colours of the flag or the traditional folk dance.

Language teachers have an important responsibility to ensure that foreign language learners acquire the different skills needed to be competent in the target language (Byram, 2008, p. 83). These skills should involve listening, speaking, writing and reading, but also literary and cultural knowledge and critical literacy. In this thesis, it is argued that culture teaching could favourably embrace a wider range of cultures, as well as a wider range of material, and seeks to exemplify how a picturebook on South Africa can be an example of how to do exactly that. Louie claims that multicultural literature benefits the classroom, but also that there has been little research that explores exactly how it benefits the pupils, and how learners interact with the text (Louie, 2005, p. 566). Not only does the current thesis seek to research to what extent the picturebook can help increase decentering skills, and thereby develop intercultural competence, but also takes a look at how readers interact with this narrative, in order to evaluate if the topic of decentering is, in fact, teachable at the primary school level.

**Why the picturebook?**

In general, literature has an ability to engage and evoke feelings within the reader in a very special way (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144). All my life, literature has, to me, been a way to dive into unfamiliar stories, connect with the characters, empathize with them, laugh, cry and learn from them. Nothing could capture my attention like a good book, even at a young age. To many, reading fiction in the foreign language classroom might sound like a huge obstacle, thinking that it will be a struggle to many of the learners, or one fears not being able to find material that suits both the stronger and weaker learners in terms of English language proficiency. It is my belief that the strength of the picturebook is its ability to reach every learner, young or old, strong or weak. The pictures might act as support for a pupil with lower English proficiency, whereas it can be a source of interpretation and new information to the learner who masters the text well. Naturally, there are picturebooks created to be authentic texts suited for the native speaker – and *The Soccer Fence* is, in fact, one such book – but, this study also shows how learners can work with and understand surprisingly difficult texts when supported by other pupils, the teacher, or simply other sources of information, e.g. pictures.

Generally, from my experience, topics such as apartheid are taught factually, as is the case with many historical events in teaching. Using a narrative presents an alternative, and in many cases, a favourable approach to the teaching of historical events. Presenting the learners with a narrative gives them characters to relate to, empathise with, be angry and provoked by, and explains a sometimes difficult situation through the eyes of a character one grows

attached to. The storyline might become more personal, and hopefully one remembers more of the context, simply because one empathises with the characters in the story in a different way. Providing the participants with a narrative they become involved in is a strength of literature, and the basis of the project in question.

### 1.1.2 Previous research on the field

Intercultural competence is a well-researched field, in many ways lead by the thoughts and theories of Byram. He developed the theory of intercultural *savoirs*, which contain all the different aspects necessary to be able to act interculturally (Byram, 2008, p. 68). He claims that an important job of language learning should be developing healthy attitudes and accurate perceptions of different cultures. In regards to research, Byram highlights the necessity of this research when stating that: "the causal relationship between language teaching and culture learning in form of insights and attitudes is one that has been analysed, albeit rarely" (Byram, 2008, p. 94). The field of intercultural competence requires new insight into the relationship between language learning and culture, both in regards to material and didactic models. Byram continues to argue that research is needed about "the use of literature to explore otherness and develop intercultural understanding" (Byram, 2008, p. 98).

Compared to the wide field of intercultural competence, decentering is much less researched, especially in educational settings. Burkman (2008) conducted research focusing on decentering, but within a clinical trial about psychopathology, not generalizable to the context of education. Within life-medicine, decentering has been explored as a way to shift perspectives from stressful situations, as well as its relationship to metacognitive processes (Bernstein et al., 2015; Kessel et al., 2016; Lebois et al., 2015). In other areas of medicine, decentering has been used in relation to psychometric properties (Gecht et al., 2014; Soler et al., 2014). The most relatable piece of research available is that of Fincher (2012), who researched decentering in relation to social development. Although she focused on discovering relationships between decentering and chronological age, a big part of her study was also focused on its relationship to higher class homes, family bonds, Q-sort scale scores (the study of a person's subjectivity) and CPI Empathy Scores (personality test scoring cognitive empathy) (Fincher, 2012, p. 16).

No research has been found that directly touches on the educational context and thesis question about decentering that this study revolves around. The mentioned research can still be considered relevant as a basis for understanding the properties of decentering, and especially Fincher (2012) and Burkman (2008) have been used in the following chapters as

far as the theoretical foundation is concerned. Together with Byram and theory on intercultural competence, they have contributed to providing a holistic understanding of what intercultural competence is, and how decentering has developed from the studies of Piaget and into an element of intercultural competence.

## 1.2 Thesis and research questions

The field of intercultural education and competence is vast, and there are several elements that would be interesting to research. However, for the course of this thesis, the topic was severely narrowed and focused on one particular aspect of intercultural competence. Thus, after extensive reading, it became interesting to research the topic of decentering at a primary school level. Piaget's claimed that children were not able to decenter before reaching the preadolescent age, and it became interesting to see whether this cognitive age-claim were rooted in today's reality, based on the following research question (Fincher, 2012, p. 2).

How can the picturebook The Soccer Fence by Phil Bildner be used as a teaching tool to develop decentering in a Norwegian L2 classroom?

The purpose of this research is to enhance a primary school class' development of decentering skills while reading multicultural literature. However, the thesis question is very open, and requires a narrower focus. Because of this, two research questions, and a sub-question, were formulated.

> 1. Is there an increase in decentering skills after the second reading of the book?
>> 1a. Are there noticeable differences in scores between the four test questions?
> 2. What is the nature of the participants' responses?

The primary focus of the study is on the first research question, which has been awarded the most time and space in this thesis. The decentering skills of the participants were measured before and after systematically working with decentering through an intervention period, and the results from this part of data collection are awarded the most attention. These results are presented and discussed thoroughly in the results chapter (p. 49) and in the discussion chapter (p.71). The main objective of the thesis is to investigate whether decentering is a learnable skill at the 5$^{th}$ grade age, meaning approximately 10 years old, and whether it is teachable at the primary school level. In addition, it was of interest to see whether there were noticeable

differences in results between the four questions on the test, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the main findings from the data collection. Thus, sub-question 1a was added, and is discussed in relation to the main findings of question 1.

However, to gain a metaperspective on the teaching tool in practice, it was seen as favourable to observe how the participants reacted to working with this topic through a narrative, and the second research question was included to shed some light on how the method was received. These results are based on the reactions uttered during the intervention period, considered a supplemental part of data collection.

The two research questions differ both in formulation and their implicit expectations. However, both are relevant to the discussion of findings regarding decentering as a learnable skill, and whether it is teachable in the foreign language classroom.

The first (1) question expresses no specific expectation as to what the outcome of the data collection might be. It merely asks whether or not increase has been found from the analysis of data, and there is a foundation of openness as to what might occur when trying out the teaching tool. Its sub-question also asks for nuances that explain the relationships between the four test questions, and whether their increase differ, as well as, if that is the case, *why*. This question is relevant to the thesis question because it seeks to provide results that indicate whether decentering is, in fact, a learnable skill within intercultural competence.

The second (2) research question differs from the first in both formulation and implicit content. It asks about the reactions of the participant, assuming that there will be responses to the use of the teaching tool. It is relevant to the thesis question because it makes it possible to say something about what happens to the participant group during the project. A big part of the project is performed through peer work and plenary discussions, in addition to individual work. This made sociocultural theories relevant in regards to interaction and the role of the teacher, and will be presented shortly in the following theory chapter.

## 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of a total of six chapters, including this introduction chapter and final commentary. This excludes bibliography and appendices. In the introduction chapter, the context, background, relevance, and structure of the thesis has been presented, as well as the thesis question and research questions.

In chapter 2, the theoretical basis and foundation of the thesis is accounted for. This includes

theory on intercultural education, sociocultural theory and literature on the power of reading. In addition, a section on the value of South Africa as a topic concludes the chapter.

In chapter 3, the method and material used for data collection is explained. This involves a description of Interventionist Quasi-Experimental design, the research methods used and the design of the current research. Here, ethical aspects of research, including validity, reliability and generalizability are also included.

In chapter 4, results and analyses of findings are explained. The chapter is divided into two parts, one for each of the two research question, where the findings from each of the research questions are explained separately.

In chapter 5, theory and findings are discussed in light of the research questions. This chapter is also divided into two, one for each of the research questions.

In chapter 6, final commentaries regarding the study and thoughts on the future of decentering are accounted for.

# 2. Theory

## 2.1 Introduction

In the following chapter the background and theoretical foundation of the thesis is accounted for. This will be central to the analysis and discussion that follow in chapters four and five. The topic and project in question is vast, and several important theories could pose important and interesting angles on this thesis. The theoretical focus has been narrowed to that of Byram's model of the five components of intercultural competence, theory on children's ability to decentre and intercultural theory. Also, the position of literature in language teaching, seen in relation to the development of intercultural competence, will be presented.

## 2.2 Intercultural theory and the sociocultural process

### 2.2.1 Background

The world is becoming increasingly more international and mobile, and as a result of this, children are exposed to new cultural impulses almost on a daily basis. A large number of children today are as mobile as their parents; they travel, experience foreign cultures and languages. Globalisation has affected Norwegian schools in many ways, and one of them is that Norwegian schools are becoming increasingly multicultural. Never before has there been such a need for us to understand each other, show respect and appreciate diversity in all aspects of life. Whether this important need is sufficiently appreciated in today's Norwegian curricula is however debated. Portera and Grant state that the change in population calls for new and revised methods and ways of working, as well as a new curriculum (Portera & Grant, 2011, p. 13). As previously mentioned, traditional Norwegian curricula in the subject of English have revolved around western countries such as Britain and the USA, mainly dealing with static knowledge and factual information. Of course, when studying a country and culture, knowledge of its history and traditions is necessary. Facts and figures, social conditions and cultural problems should favourably be taught, but not solely so. This material should be accompanied by other cultural elements, such as e.g. development of empathy, tolerance and open-mindedness (Wandel, 2002, p. 78). Therefore, there is a need for the curriculum to bring to light other cultures and topics relevant for English teaching and new ways of working with them. Wandel mentions that countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Canada and India all have cultural backgrounds that should play a more relevant role in the EFL classroom (2002, p. 73). The fact that English is a world language should present a change in paradigm in EFL teaching and teaching material. Not only do pupils need practical

skills in using a language, but the need for cultural competence also becomes evident. According to Byram, "foreign language teaching should contribute to the international education" and this highlights the need to "integrate the development of intercultural competence into the aims of primary education"(Byram, 2008, p. 79). Intercultural competence is not only centred on knowledge, but is a complex notion with several layers. Also important is the fact that these layers are "not automatically acquired", but requires interaction and exposure to new and different cultures. It is therefore an important aspect of teaching and learning (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 12).

### 2.2.2 Education and culture

No matter if one is financial advantaged or growing up in poverty, the populations of today's complex global community benefit from intercultural education (Portera & Grant, 2011, p. 3) This side of education values the ability of a culture to focus both on the self and the other; to appreciate the differences and how we are shaped by our backgrounds and surroundings (Portera & Grant, 2011, p. 3). Many parts of education focus on developing personal skills and abilities, looking purely to the self and how the individual performs. Intercultural education challenges learners to take responsibility towards their neighbour, both close and far, shifting the focus both between the global and local responsibilities. Awareness of these aspects of an intercultural society has increased substantially in both political and academic spheres, attributing an important part of this development to the early years of education. Portera and Grant state that schools have the task of generating versatile workers that "meet the challenges of the international marketplace" (2011, p. 8). However, educating for financial gain is not the central element when talking about intercultural education. Especially after World War II, the focus on human rights, dialogue, viral interaction and exchanges of thought became more dominant. One was no longer viewing a multicultural society as a threat but rather as enrichment, recognizing and respecting other cultures and people (Ormevik Saxe, 2015, p. 18).

Intimately connected to the notion of *intercultural education* is the term "culture" (Portera & Grant, 2011, p. 4). This constantly changing and transforming notion is constructed in the co-existence of people. The 2006 UNESCO guidelines for intercultural education emphasise that culture and education are two concepts that are intertwined. Culture shapes our way of thinking and influences what frames of reference we have, which again affects our actions, thoughts, feelings etc. (UNESCO, 2006) All participants of education, both teachers and learners, influence the learning process with their cultural perspectives.

Education is therefore vital in the process of developing understanding between individuals and groups anchored in different cultures. This spans from recognizing one's own egocentrism and developing tolerance, to problematizing racism. The International Commission on Education has identified four aims of intercultural education, more specifically *Learning to know* (knowledge)*, Learning to do* (social competencies)*, Learning to live together* and *Learning to be* (beneficial cognitive capacity*) (UNESCO, 2006, p. 20). UNESCO also highlights the importance of intercultural education not only being an add-on to the existing curriculum, but also influencing the learning material, the methods of learning, languages of instruction etc. Especially the inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices is emphasised, learning about and discussing histories and cultures of non-dominant groups in society (UNESCO, 2006, p. 19). This specific aspect of intercultural education is the core of the current study, and also an important element in intercultural competence.

### 2.2.3 Sociocultural processes and interaction

The goal of the present study is to develop decentering while interpreting and understanding a literary text. Intercultural education and intercultural competence are, both in this context and in general, closely linked to interaction and Vogotsky's sociocultural theory (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2014, p. 207). Vygotsky claimed that any learner is dependent on the support of an expert, in this case a teacher, to reach his or her full potential, i.e. their Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). He emphasises that the task and the situation must be adapted to the level of the child, focusing on "what the child can learn and do with the help of others" (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 140). This theory, that involves what a learner can accomplish through collaboration, is linked to Krashen's input hypothesis theory ($i$+1), stating that learners progress in their knowledge if the input they receive is slightly more advanced than the level they are currently at (Lantolf, 2000, p. 226). Their learning is assisted by a more competent guide, which helps them stretch their learning potential past what they could manage on their own. Discussion and reflection is important in the current intervention process, and working with the topic in a plenary setting, as opposed to only working individually, is viewed to be favourable. In this study, the learner is not seen merely as a product of input, but the developmental process that happens together with the rest of the group is what is of special interest to the project (Lantolf, 2000, p. 51). Vygotsky several times refers to experiments tracing the development of a skill at an early stage, focusing on the relationships within which this skills is developed (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 141).

When studying the development of intercultural competence in upper secondary

school, Hoff found the role of the teacher to be vital to the learning of the participants. She quotes Lantolf (2000) in relating this theory "specifically to foreign language learning" as she argues that "cultural artefacts carry mediating effects" (2013, p. 34). Working with multicultural literature such as this through interaction provides the possibility for a "common and richer experience for all", and it is an important prerequisite that the teacher has thoroughly planned his or her role as a cultural mediator in the process (Hoff, 2013, p. 34). It is the theoretical basis of the present study that the development of decentering will be closely linked to the support of both the teacher and the scaffolding role of the participants themselves. The assistance has to be developmentally appropriate, meaning the teacher has to actively adapt activities and messages to the group, and the learners should be at similar levels (Lantolf, 2000, p. 51). Many of the activities used are both peer activities and plenary discussions, in addition to the individual work. This highlights the need to consider the role of interaction in the decentering development, and being aware of its importance. Ibsen and Wiland claim that literature on culture can pose as a meeting place for both interaction and internalization, experiencing the "self" between two different cultures, and stretching your own potential in that meeting, "your *zone of proximal development*" (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 143). Previous studies on decentering have focused mainly on the individual learner and the properties of decentering relevant to that specific participant (Burkman, 2008; Fincher, 2012). It is the interest of this study to examine the developmental process in a holistic manner, as they occur in the interaction of the learners (Lantolf, 2000, p. 51). The current project is not set in secluded, clinical trials, but in a group setting where the possibility is great that the participants might influence each other in different ways.

## 2.3 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is a complex notion, generally considered a combination of several concepts. It is not just about knowledge about a culture, but is influenced by several aspects. One of the most influential definitions in Europe of what intercultural competence can be identified as, is that of Michael Byram. Barrett et.al. point out that in order to really understand the concept of intercultural competence, one needs understanding of the terms *identity, culture, intercultural encounters* and *competence* (2014, p.13). Their definition will be used for the course of this thesis and these different terms will therefore briefly be explained.

**Identity, culture, intercultural encounters and competence**

The term identity is generally thought to explain a person's "sense of self", who they consider themselves to be and which values are important to them. One also tends to differ between *personal* and *social* identities. Personal identity describes identity that has to do with attributes, relationships and roles, for example: gentle, creative, sister, working-class etc. Social identity on the other hand describes social groups that a person is a part of, such as nationality, age, gender, sports team and so on (Barrett, Byram, Ildiko, Pascale, & Stavroula, 2014, p. 13). These different aspects of a person's being together make up the total picture of his or her identity. One might draw on different aspects when encountering different situations (e.g. student at the university) or have more consistent descriptions of themselves that stay the same even though the situations change (e.g. Jewish working-class teacher).

How to define *culture* has been notoriously debated. Different cultures consist of a vast number of values, are greatly heterogeneous and usually have very little to no consistent common practices. They are influenced by individuals and will therefore also change over time (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 13). Despite this obvious dynamic aspect, there are sides to cultures that are definable, namely material, social and subjective culture, as mentioned by Barrett et. al. (2014). Material culture is the artefacts usually used by the members of a group (e.g. tools, clothing etc.), social culture consists of social institutions of the group (e.g. laws, language, religion etc.), and subjective culture are the beliefs and norms used "as a frame of reference for thinking about, making sense of and relating to the world" (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 14). All of these three components together make up a culture, both material, social and subjective aspects. So even though cultures are dynamic and constantly changing due to societal and political circumstances, and also because the individuals that make up a culture are always going from one situation to another, there are usually common factors that can be identified.

The term *intercultural encounter* is used about a meeting between two or more people with different cultural backgrounds. It can be either a meeting in person or virtually, and can cover both meeting people of different nationality, regional backgrounds, religions etc. The focus in such a meeting is not the individual person's character, but "one responds to them on the basis of their affiliation to another culture or sets of cultures" (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 16). Barrett et al. also underline the importance of intercultural competence in such an interaction because it is necessary to achieve "harmonious interaction and successful dialogue" (2014, p. 16).

*Competence* is a term that can be described in different ways. It can be understood as having a set of skills within a certain field, but this description is too narrow in regards to intercultural competence. Barrett et al. describes it as a "combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action in any relevant situation" (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 16). It can therefore be defined as the ability to solve tasks presented to you with the necessary skills it requires.

In summary one can define intercultural competence as a combination of all these five components, thereby consisting of attitudes, knowledge and skills. In addition, Byram mentions the aspect of developing awareness and understanding of the values that influence us. Byram presents these different factors in his model of the *savoirs of intercultural competence*.

### 2.3.1 The *savoirs* of intercultural competence

According to Byram, being intercultural is an activity. One sees similarities and differences and acts as a mediator between the two cultures and the people in them, as one takes an external perspective on a situation (2008, p. 68). Within such an activity are certain behaviours, because, as mentioned, acting interculturally requires different abilities. The process of acquiring intercultural competence involves five elements, which Byram calls *savoirs*.



SKILLS
interpret and relate
(*savoir comprendre*)

KNOWLEDGE
of self and other;
of interaction:
individual and societal
(*savoirs*)

EDUCATION
political education
critical cultural
awareness
(*savoir s'engager*)

ATTITUDES
relativizing self
valuing other
(*savoir être*)

SKILLS
discover and/or interact
(*savoir apprendre/faire*)
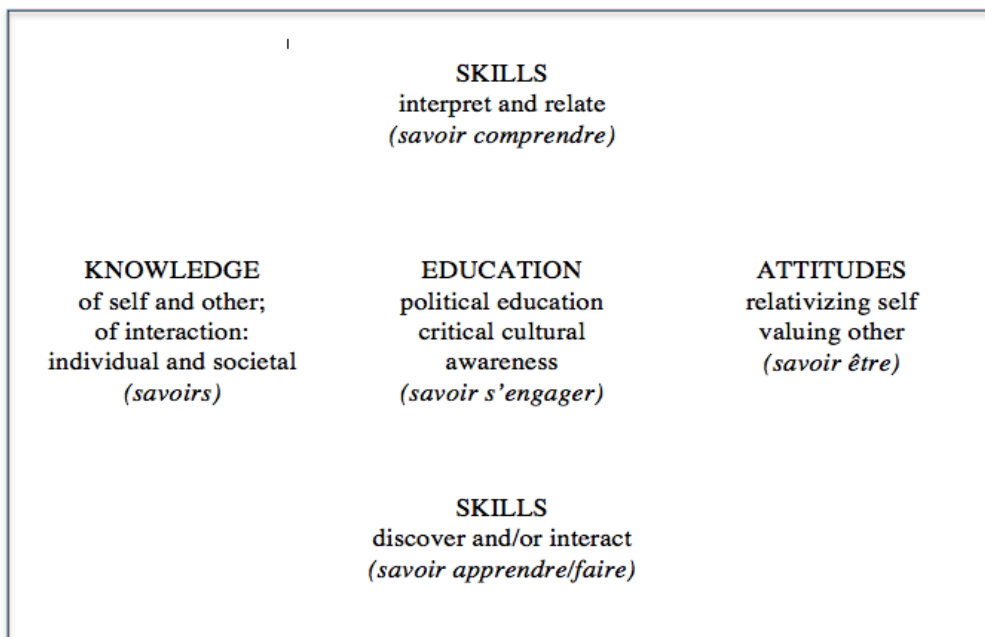
**Figure 1** Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 2008, p.230)

The first element is simply called just that - *savoirs*. The word "savoirs" is a French noun and refers to knowledge. "Savoir" is a verb that means "to know". This aspect of intercultural competence refers to how social groups and identity function. The massive leaps in technology have made us closer than ever, and global society of today makes knowledge necessary, beyond that of literature and art in the western world. Cultures have never before had as much interaction as they currently do, and knowledge of religious beliefs, values, norms, politeness etc. is crucial in order to establish relationships based on understanding, tolerance and respect. Cultural differences are often the cause of disputes and communicative challenges, which is why knowledge at a deeper level is crucial.

*Savoir comprendre* describes a person's skills of interpreting and relating. By this is meant the ability to look at an event or document from a different culture and relate it to one's own, trying to interpret it in the light of the knowledge one has. In the classroom, pupils are always exposed to texts and situations about other cultures in poems, factual texts and other types of literature, and are therefore required to have the ability to understand, interpret and relate this to their own culture and understanding of the world.

*Savoir apprendre* is the skill of discovery and interaction. It regards a person's ability to acquire new information about a culture and its traditions, and to use these in communication and interaction (Byram, 2008, p. 69). In today's society, this type of interaction can occur both face-to-face, virtually or through social media. In such meetings, pupils are required to interpret, explain and use strategies for communication to make themselves understood and to understand incoming information.

*Savoir's engager* is defined by Wiest as "the aim of intercultural learning" (2010, p. 2). Often called critical cultural awareness or political education, it can be seen as having the ability to look at a situation from a metaperspective. We have all been influenced by generalizations and stereotypes that have developed over time, and critical cultural awareness highlights the important need to be aware of the assumptions and judgements we make that can be products of our society (Houghton, 2013, p. 1). A person has to be aware of what values one has and how these values influence how one looks at other people and *their* values. Byram himself defines critical cultural awareness as the "ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (2008, p. 69).

The last and final savoir in Byram's model is called *savoir être*. In short, this is the aspect of intercultural competence covering attitudes, and refers to "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures" as well as one's own (Byram, 2008, p.

69). "Suspend disbelief" is here used to explain the ability to let go of ones inability to believe or accept something as true. In regards to primary education, this is the savoir seen as the one most appropriate to work with and is the savoir that I will explain more in-depth. It embodies the ability to decentre, which is what is researched further in this thesis.

### 2.3.2 Savoir être

When traveling to another country on holiday or spending a semester abroad, one is faced with various new impressions and situations. Savoir être manifests itself through wide-eyed curiosity, the desire to try new things and to be open to new impressions and experiences. A person who has not developed these attitudes, who does not wish to be open to the possibility of new information enriching their view on life, will remain closed up in the familiar and safe surroundings of home (Byram, 2008, p. 231). Realizing that the world is getting smaller by the hour and that we are daily influenced by other cultures is a central educational goal for pupils. With this in mind, teachers have an important responsibility to prepare pupils for reactions they may have when facing an intercultural encounter.

Byram et al. phrases savoir être as: making "the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (2002, p. 7). This should not be misunderstood to mean that it is the teacher's responsibility to *influence* the attitudes of the pupils with his or her own opinions. Byram et.al. point out that many teachers have expressed worries regarding using their position to pass on attitudes that influence pupils' values and shaping them to match their own. He still also states that others see it as a "pedagogical responsibility to influence attitudes" (2002, p. 29). Whatever the position of the teacher, the goal of developing savoir être is not to shape the pupils with specific attitudes, neither positive nor negative. The focus of savoir être is to develop curiousness, openness and a willingness to see the world from different perspectives.

A central objective within savoir être is that of broadening one's perspective. In working with developing positive attitudes, a person is challenged to interpret both familiar and unfamiliar circumstances both in one's own culture as well as others (Byram, 2008, p. 230). Byram exemplifies this when proposing that pupils could engage in role-play or be explained a (hypothetical) situation and then try to look at it from different perspectives. Usually one sees a situation or conflict in light of one's own values and opinions, and an important challenge to achieve growth within this area, is to try to look at phenomena from different perspectives, both from familiar and unfamiliar vantage points. This is often called "the ability to decentre" or "decentering", and will be the main goal to measure through the data collection, more thoroughly explained in chapter 3 on method.

### 2.3.3 Learner appropriateness

When working to develop intercultural competence and the different skills required, the aspect of developing attitudes is highlighted as being the savoir most appropriate for primary school. For the first part of their lives, children are under heavy influence from school, home, the environments they generally spend time in, and are shaped by the opinions and attitudes that they meet. Byram states that savoir être is probably the component of intercultural competence most appropriate for teaching because children have not yet been completely formed and shaped by the opinions that surround them. At primary school level most pupils probably will not view all parts of their culture as natural yet. They are still under influence, are still absorbing the impressions they are being exposed to. Just like in other subjects, exercises and tasks given must be selected based on the stage of development of the learner, and compared to critical cultural awareness that requires an awareness of the generalizations, stereotypes and values that surround us, the savoir concerned with attitudes and beliefs will most likely be the one that is easiest to encourage pupils to work with, says Byram(Byram, 2008, p. 82). Many primary school theorists claim that language learning go hand in hand with culture teaching as long as it is done through a learner-appropriate manner. It is also pointed out that this savoir is best developed through experimental learning, where pupils are exposed to or shown a relevant situation followed by discussion and reflection upon it guided by a competent teacher (Byram, 2008, p. 82). In this way of working learners are challenged with being exposed to situations that make demands of emotions and feelings, both affective and cognitive. This is a kind of culture shock that can be positive when structured well by the teacher, and helps pupils to analyse their own reactions and immediate thoughts (Byram et al., 2002, p. 14).

### 2.3.4 The ability to decentre

Within the layers of intercultural competence, and again within the layers of savoir être, lies the ability to decentre, in short described as "the ability to take another person's perspective" (Fincher, 2012, p. 1). How acting interculturally looks can vary greatly, and can both be very simple and very complex. When visiting the Philippines a few years ago with a choir consisting of Norwegian teenagers, who met a culture very different from their own, the conductor, who had lived in Manila for several years, acted as an important mediator. She explained the signs of where to pick up luggage, the different appropriate hand gestures and

facial expressions, and the specific monetary system. In these general situations, her intercultural role was very simple. However, at the beginning of the trip, several incidents occurred where there was a fault in communication. When trying to pay for a bracelet in a store, one of the teenagers seemed to have made the owner upset without understanding why. The choir leader then had to step in and explain that it is not always appropriate to haggle on the price, especially in more formal stores. The two did not have a problem understanding each other linguistically, but both had an understanding of how the sale would precede that did not correspond. The choir leader's ability to decentre, to take a step back and see both cultures with an objective eye, was necessary to make the situation understandable for both parts.

Piaget first introduced the term *decentering* when working with theories on cognitive development. When researching how children structure the physical world that surrounds them, he found that the cognitive constraint among the children in question were wide, and labelled it inability to "decenter" (Cromer, 1971, p. 353). Further, he explained that the child has a developmental process that takes it from an initial egocentrism, where everything revolves around the child's own body and actions, to a "decentered" state in which "his body and actions assume their objective relationship with reference to all the other objects and events in the universe" (1971, p. 353). Piaget defined decentering as "the ability to conceptualize multiple perspectives simultaneously, or being capable of observing a situation from more than one point of view" (Fincher, 2012, p. 6). Fincher (2012) agrees with Keller when she emphasises that decentering is an essential process when it comes to social development, and a person's ability to decenter influences the relationships one has and daily interactions with other people. Piaget also suggested that the ability to decenter increased with chronological age, but meant that only children and young adults above the age of twelve were able to decenter properly. The stages between age 7-8 and 11-12 mark the development of concrete and formal operational thought, the latter being the stage where the child develops perspectives, measurement of surfaces and understanding of causality (Fincher, 2012, p. 2). This age-claim would probably be challenged by most field experts today, and is the main reason why pupils from a 5th grade class have been chosen as participants.

The teaching of English generally provides learners with practical skills such as the ability to listen, speak, read and write in the target language. Though this is also important, language learning should develop certain other aspects necessary to understand other cultures. Wandel mentions the ability to feel empathy, to recognise (the reasons for) misunderstandings and the ability to change perspectives (2002, p. 74). The ability to decentre contains

*multiperspectivity*, meaning a person's "ability to decentre from one's own perspective and to take other people's perspective into consideration" as well as one's own (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 20). It does not mean to completely abandon one's own values and opinions to adopt others', but to gain awareness of how the perspectives differ from one another, and develop respect for both the similarities and differences. Decentring can pose a challenge as it can be hard to psychologically decentre for a young child. However, it has been proved to have a positive impact on the ability of learners to become aware of their positioning and beliefs "through comparing and relating them to those of other people" (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 23).Therefore, it is not only beneficial in order to gain understanding of other cultures, but also in developing self-understanding. A clear challenge when it comes to this ability is how to measure its growth. Byram states that it is an intuitive goal to assess pupils' knowledge (savoirs), but "it might appear undesirable to assess his or her willingness to decentre and suspend (dis)belief (savoir être) (2008, p. 221). It is an abstract skill and difficult to measure. However, measuring it might not necessarily be the goal. The goal is, as mentioned earlier, not to impose certain opinions and attitudes on the pupils, but to challenge them to experience life from different perspectives and to see the world through someone else's eyes.

As previously stated, the prioritized issue in language teaching and learning should not be on only acquiring new knowledge (savoirs), but implementing new methods, activities and organize the classroom so that new attitudes (savoir être), new skills (savoir apprendre/faire and savoir comprendre) and critical awareness (savoir s'engager) are developed (Byram et al., 2002, p. 27). There are several possible ways to enhance multiperspectivity. Using visual aids, brainstorming, poetry, authentic texts, interviews and e-mail exchanges are just some of the opportunities at hand. A method mentioned as especially beneficial by several theorists is however storytelling and construction of narratives. Engaging stories place the reader in someone else's shoes for a while and make him or her involved in an alternative situation than their own. Thus, stories "help participants to decentre from their own values", and what they daily take for granted (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 40). The narrative as a method for developing intercultural competence opens up a rich source of pedagogical material, which can be reflected upon and discussed in the classroom.

## 2.4 The power of reading

A vast number of research studies on literature conclude that reading is an enjoyable activity to most people. Krashen presented in 1994 the pleasure hypothesis, mainly stating that

"pedagogical activities that promote language acquisition are enjoyable". He emphasised that while "enjoyment is no guarantee of effectiveness", strong research evidence, as described in his book, has proved that free voluntary reading is viewed most enjoyable by research participants (Krashen, 2004, p. 28) He refers to research showing that eighty percent (n= 39) of participants would rather read popular literature than study grammar (Krashen, 2004, p. 31). It is a field of learning that appeals to most learners, and the majority of teachers today will probably also agree that reading is an activity that influences cognitive development. Krashen presents several cases of research that showed that pupils that knew more, read more. He also mentions that pupils who read more displayed more cultural knowledge; this being measured through cultural literacy tests (2004, p. 35).

The numbers and research mentioned above describes attitudes to reading in general. Ibsen and Wiland pose an important question when they ask: "Does responding to literature in a foreign language differ principally from responding to literature in one's own language?" (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 137). They emphasise that a foreign language learner looks at a text differently from a native speaker. When reading a text in a foreign language, one looks at it from a different cultural perspective and one "struggles with the language" in a different way from a native speaker (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 137). Meeting a book or text in a foreign language may evoke different emotional and personal experiences with the reader than if they read the text in their mother tongue. This is why adapting the choice of literature and strategy for reading to the level of the learners is crucial if reading is supposed to have the desired learning outcome. Pupils can still discover new things about themselves through a text even though it is presented to them in a foreign language. This process will involve pupils in a learning process, Ibsen and Wiland state, and can work at both an affective and cognitive level regardless of language, if one does it thoroughly (2000, p. 144).

In addition to presenting an opportunity for genuine emotional reactions and cognitive learning, literature also presents opportunities for the development of cultural knowledge. Through literature, life and reality are represented and described in condensed form, and the way the world is described may "challenge our own prejudices and fixed opinions" about societies (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144).  In order to be able to see a situation from different perspectives, readers have to "detach themselves, at least temporarily" from what they see as obvious truths (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144). Developing the ability to do this is what will be explored further as the main objective in this thesis.

## 2.4.1 The picturebook and intercultural competence

Literary fiction is a genre that will hopefully be familiar to all pupils reaching middle school. One often sees pupils diving into literature and escaping into new and exciting stories at every chance they have. Picturebooks appeal to learners at all levels, and can be adapted to reach everyone. Hoff points out that when it comes to the development of intercultural competence, using fictional texts rather than factual ones will also in many cases be more suitable. She emphasises that fiction works at both a cognitive and at an emotional level, which is also the case for intercultural competence (2013, p. 28). In addition, fiction has the ability to engage learners more as they dive into a universe or a culture that is unlike their daily life. Many learners become completely immersed in the situations they read about and respond with sincere and intense emotional reactions to what is happening. There is no denying that literature has a great effect on young children with not only its ability to entertain, but also as it can stretch the imagination and "reminds them of their humanity and exposes them to other cultures" (Dolan, Anne M., 2014, p. 8).

Fictional literature has a special place in education with its ability to reach beyond the surface. Dolan quotes Dowd in saying that when readers read and hear culturally diverse material, they learn that "beneath surface differences of colour culture or ethnicity, all people experience universal feelings of love, sadness, self-worth, justice and kindness" (Dolan, Anne M., 2014, p. 9). Not only does intercultural competence revolve around developing curiosity and openness towards other cultures, but also to challenge the learner to reflect on personal aspects and what they view as natural in their own culture. There is a challenge in how to do this in the classroom, and letting pupils dive into a strange and foreign situation and culture can be a useful medium.

Traditionally picturebooks have been associated with kindergarten and the lower classes. They have, as will be discussed shortly, been mostly used as a means to develop literacy skills with younger children, but in recent years, newer and modern picturebooks have made somewhat of a comeback, being used both in higher grades and many even by adults. Today's picturebooks often present thought-provoking text and imagery, as well as underlying messages and aspects of interpretations. Dolan argues that picturebooks can be "particularly effective in promoting creativity and critical thinking with older children" (Dolan, 2014, p. 9). Johnson and Freedman argue that picturebooks can be an accessible medium in reflecting upon and understanding social issues that can be adapted to different levels. Not only does this type of literature contain less text in general (which is helpful at the

lower levels), but there is also the interplay between text and imagery that can both support understanding and be subject of interpretation.

The power of visual images is also an aspect of picturebooks central to discussion. Images and pictures surround us like never before, and have become a central part of our society. It can be argued that this constant exposure to visual images makes us notice, appreciate and interpret them less. Pupils can benefit strongly from being challenged to read images and the messages that can be interpreted from them, and to explore different angles from visual input (Dolan, 2014, p. 15). As mentioned, the strength of the picturebook lies in the interplay between text and picture, but often teachers seem to often focus on solely reading the text, and almost excluding the pictures. This will be further explained in sub-chapter 2.4.2.

The relevance of the picturebook in developing intercultural competence is, as mentioned, multiple. Not only do they simply appeal to children in a particular way compared to other genres, but they are also an excellent example of how one can illustrate the significant changes that have occurred in the global world in these recent decades. An important part of intercultural education is to make learners understand that the world is constantly changing. Fortunately there is a selection of recent picturebooks that deal with important global issues through short texts and powerful imagery in an understandable manner (Dolan, 2014, p. 17). Dolan mentions how picturebooks such as *September Roses* (Winter, 2004) and *The Man who Walked between the Towers* (Gerstein, 2007) were able to present the incidents that occurred during 11 September 2001 in a child-friendly way. These were events that teachers found difficult to teach about and discuss in class, but picturebooks in this case proved useful to describe several different angles. In similar cases, picturebooks can be used to present different angles and perspectives on the same situation, e.g. war and peace, religions or simply differences within one city or neighbourhood. Pupils can come to develop understanding for abstract terms and notions through depending on multiple sources of input, both text and picture.

### 2.4.2 The elements of picturebooks

The main factor that distinguishes picturebooks from other types of texts found in children's literature is the need for readers to attend to both the written and visual text. As mentioned previously, imagery plays a crucial role in the narrative in combination with the text. In addition to the pictures, elements such as the "title page, covers, endpapers, dedications, author notes" and other material such as associated websites make up the paratextual features

of the book (Dolan, 2014, p. 13). This paratext consists of features within the book (peritext) and outside of it (epitext). Peritext is made up of physical aspects of a picturebook excluding the verbal and visual text, meaning the covers, dust jackets, dedication pages etc. as mentioned. Epitext on the other hand, refers to discussions that surround the picturebook, such as books reviews (Dolan, 2014, p. 14). Especially the peritext will prove to be of importance in reading of picturebooks at the primary school level. These elements play on our imagination and interpretative mind, and challenge us to use several senses in understanding the messages and plot in the story. Learners today are increasingly aware that text and picture go together, and know that in today's multimodal world we may need to rely on several sources working together to construct meaning. Sadly, in many primary classrooms the use of picture and text together is less appreciated after pupils crack the code of reading and writing. Speed, fluency and amount of words have gained prominence, and may in many cases overshadow the benefits of reading text with both elements present. What is important to remember is that pupils have to continue to experience pictures and text together in order to understand messages through this combination in other arenas. Computers, advertisements and newspaper articles are just a few examples of sources of information that rely on both these elements (Dolan, 2014, p. 16). Picturebooks, with their complexity and ability to reach readers at different ages and levels, can create truly powerful pictures and descriptions of people and places. They may therefore have different didactic outcome than suspected by the teacher. Dolan points out that it is the important task of the teacher to "interrogate these images in a manner that promotes enquiry-based learning and develops skills of critical visual literacy" (2014, p. 16).

### 2.4.3 Challenges with foreign language texts

Using a text in a foreign language does however pose some important challenges to consider. Reading a text in a language that is not one's mother tongue deprives pupils of some of the advantages they have when reading a text that is. Word plays, cultural connotations and the richness of the language may be lost to many, and important linguistic messages in the story may not be picked up. In addition to the language being an obvious challenge, some pupils may also be hesitant or even rejective of reading longer pieces of literature in a language they are not fluent in yet. Day and Bamford (1998, p. 55) point out that exposing learners to a text that is too difficult for their level can often do more harm than good (in Hoff, 2013, p. 33). Although fictional literature can in many cases help develop interest in and a passion for

reading in general, forcing a text that is too difficult on a pupil can, in worst-case scenarios, do the opposite and "set back their reading development" (Hoff, 2013, p. 33). It is therefore crucial that a teacher takes the time to consider the level of the individual pupils and how he or she chooses to work with the pieces of literature before embarking on such a project. Especially important would be the process of choosing texts, as a teacher must choose texts suitable for the specific age group. In this case, because the pupils are at quite a young age, the picture book was chosen.

Dolan also presents the criticism of Marriott in regards to environmental picturebooks. Marriott questions whether picturebooks actually describe a realistic and appropriate angle on the world. He states that many picturebooks give readers impressions that have no strong root in the actual culture, leaving them with misleading perceptions. Also noted is that picturebooks are to many viewed as more of a piece of art than material for learning, often resulting in shortcomings in didactic layers (Dolan, 2014, p. 12). In addition to this criticism, one should also remember the aspect of teacher influence. The attitudes and interpretations of the teacher in reading of any type of literature is paramount in how a pupil interacts with the book, and what attitudes he or she brings into the reading session (2014, p. 13).

### 2.4.4 Teaching methods and the role of picturebooks

Picturebooks have traditionally had a role in the classroom mainly reserved for development of literacy. The interplay between text and picture has helped make the narrative more comprehensible to young children learning a second language. In addition to improving literacy skills, an important strength of this type of literature is its ability to make abstract messages and concepts more accessible to young children (Dolan, 2014, p. 7).

The ability of children's literature's to teach readers about the world and challenge their perspective is emphasised by several field researchers (Byram, 2008; Ibsen & Wiland, 2000), but an important thing to note, as stated by Dolan, is the often very narrow selection of material for pupils to work with (2014, p. 8). A main reason for choosing this topic for research was my own personal experience from teaching where the focus has mainly been on typical tourist-based English speaking countries, e.g. the United Kingdom and the United States. I have experience with several textbooks of English in Norwegian primary schools both as a teacher student and as an English teacher. Widely used textbooks such as *Steps, Quest, Junior Scoop, A New Scoop* and *Stairs* all implement cultural texts, songs and poetry in their textbooks, but each and all are about American or British culture. Now, this distinction is not made to single out any of these examples of materials as bad, but is meant to highlight the

potential Norwegian classrooms have in expanding the cultural focus. The desire to have more English-speaking cultures influence English teaching in Norwegian classrooms is exactly why South Africa has been chosen as a topic for this research.

## 2.5 The value of South Africa as a topic

South Africa is a significantly relevant topic within the EFL-classroom. Not only is it a vast country with a population number of approximately 55 million people, but the English language is one of the most spoken languages in the country. It is today technically and financially one of the most developed countries in Africa, and probably the country in Africa that has had the most influence politically. Due to centuries of history in tension between South Africa and European colonists, particularly Dutch and British, South Africa stands out as one of the main countries in the world to have been influenced by English-speaking cultures.

### 2.5.1 English in South Africa

The Dutch were the first people to introduce a Germanic language to South Africa by settlers in 1652 and have left still noticeable footprints in today's country. After losing America towards the end of the 18th century, Britain was looking for new colonies. Their first attempt was in 1795 when they occupied the Cape, but surrendered it to Holland again shortly after. Britain became a colonising power again in 1814 and held South Africa until the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Britain had the governmental power until South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth in 1960 (Lass, 2002, p. 108). However, British settlers – mostly military personnel and their families – were at first very much divided from the native population. They lived their lives separated from each other and had significantly little contact. It was not until 1820 when a group of five thousand settlers made the Cape their home that English started influencing the South African languages. Despite their minority in numbers, the British had the muscle to impose English as an official language in 1822. British schoolmasters were brought in and even representatives from the Church of Scotland filled empty Dutch churches to add to the numbers of English-speaking Calvinists. In 1840s and 1850s a new English-speaking wave came with Natal settlers in the eastern part of the country. After gold was discovered, a final group of settlers came between 1875-1904, leaving their own mark accent-wise (Lass, 2002, p. 109).

The different waves of settlers, both Dutch and British, have all made an impact on what has become the South African English (SAE) accent. Both settlement and internal evolution have been factors involved in forming what are now the three major lectal types of South African English: *Conservative SAE* (upper class, strongly connected to Britain), *Respectable SAE* (no strong class relation, younger age and with no British connection) and *Extreme SAE* (lower classes, many of African descent) (Lass, 2002, p. 111).

### 2.5.2 Literature about South Africa

South Africa is a familiar country to many primary school pupils; some might have travelled there, heard or read about apartheid or simply learned about it from when it hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup. No matter the reason, important questions have to be asked when deciding to teach about this culture in the classroom: What stereotypes have to be overcome? Which features of the culture should be emphasised? What should be left out and omitted? What do we wish for our pupils to learn from this culture? (Wandel, 2002, p. 76) When choosing a text to work with, one also has to consider the level and structure of the narrative. Fenner makes an important argument when she says: "if young learners take an interest in the topic of the story, they can cope with surprisingly difficult texts as regards vocabulary, structure and length" (Fenner, Katnic-Bakarsic, Kostelnikova, & Penz, 2001, p. 27).

As the participants are at different levels linguistically, it is natural that the picturebook would not challenge them the same way. Some would probably think it too easy, some too hard. Still, the fact that the picturebook consists of so many layers is what would make it suitable for such a diverse audience. Pupils having trouble with understanding certain words would hopefully understand the events out of context and the interaction between text and picture.

Several picturebooks have been written to illustrate the South African society during apartheid from different angles, examples of these being *Mandela: From the life of the South African Statesman* (Cooper, 2000)*, A South African Night* (Isadora, 1998), and *Desmond and the very mean word*, written by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Tutu, 2012). Tutu, for example, describes a real incident that occurred when he was growing up in South Africa, and uses this book to continue to influence readers of all ages with the thought of equality, justice, peace and forgiveness. The book *Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story* (Naidoo, 2002), though a novel and significantly longer in length, is another great example of literature that can be suggested to slightly older pupils as reading material to learn about South Africa. It is an important topic, and can be a gateway to understanding and learning about new cultures.

# 3. Method

## 3.1 Introduction

The present study highlights the need for quantitative research methods to collect data and analyse the thesis question at hand. The study attempts to evaluate the participants' ability to decenter. Their ability is tested and scored numerically and a period of intervention is conducted to see whether this ability can be developed using the picturebook *The Soccer Fence*. Evaluating and scoring a person's ability to decenter is not conducted using a single, set method. There are several ways to approach such a study, which gives the researcher a great responsibility when choosing methods and choosing how to proceed. The quantitative methods of data collection used in this project are pre- and post-tests and interviews with sound recordings. The pre- and post-tests are the main sources of data, and will be strengthened or challenged by the interviews. In addition, to supplement the findings of the tests and interviews, participant observation, written down as field notes, is used during the intervention to shed some additional light on the reactions of the learners to working with literature this way. The intervention was a three-part process where the participants worked with writing, discussing and reflecting on the characters in the book from different perspectives, both individually, in pairs and together as a class.

By using several sources this way, the researcher is able to supplement findings with observable phenomena, e.g. emotions to the method of working. Using multiple sources of data is called *method triangulation*, and strengthens the validity of the study (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 184). The method was chosen to achieve as solid data material as possible. Therefore, to ensure the reliability, two other master's students were approached to evaluate the scoring system and to try it out, to see if the scores they gave were similar. This provided the opportunity to understand the material on different backgrounds and strengthens the validity of the method.

First in the method chapter, the interventionist Quasi-Experimental research design is discussed, as well as the experimental group and an explanation of the use of participant observation in such a quantitative study. This is followed by a description of the method and analysis, as well as the research design. Lastly, ethical perspectives of the study regarding

parental consent, validity, reliability and generalizability are discussed.

## 3.2 Interventionist Quasi-Experimental Design

Generally, early second language research has focused on the effectiveness of teaching methods, comparing results from different kinds of teaching. Research on the process of teaching, and not solely on the product alone, has been the topic of subsequent research (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 54). In the present study, both sides of the teaching process are in focus, namely whether using literature to develop the ability to decenter increases decentering scores as well as discussing how this method was received in a 5th grade class.

Partly, because the researcher exerts control over some of the variables in the present study and because the researcher is largely participant, the study is labelled an *interventionist quasi-experimental design*. Mackey and Gass state that this type of study seeks to evaluate an intervention and demonstrates causality between an intervention and an outcome. These types of interventionist studies appear to have several strengths, and also some limitations. As mentioned above, the researcher has more control of the design of the study and implementation than he or she would in a non-interventionist study. The researcher has the opportunity to control variables that they do not wish to interfere. Even though the intervention will be quite controlled, they can still be carried out in a classroom, as opposed to e.g. in a laboratory (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 61). However, the fact that it is highly controlled may impose some artificiality on the classroom, and may sometimes not represent the natural instructional contexts. The term *quasi-experiment* is used about empirical studies that seek to estimate an impact of an intervention on its targeted population. In this case, this is measured through pre- and posttests as well as supplementing interviews. One aspect of this type of study, that separates it from other popular methods, is that it lacks the element of random assignment to experiment or control (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). The participants were chosen from convenience, something that is further elaborated upon in the following.

### 3.2.1 Experimental group

The participants in this study were not individually selected to participate based on characteristics or skills, but were a case of convenience sampling. When this project was being planned, the researcher was one of the teachers of the group in question, and the interest of both their main teacher and parental group made them a natural choice. Dealing with participant groups this way has practical advantages as "it deals with intact groups and thus

does not disrupt the existing research setting" (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003, p. 160). Working with only one set group also causes the study to be labelled a one-group pretest-posttest design. This means that one compares the results from the intervention based on (a) posttest results, and (b) mean gain scores, being the difference between the posttest mean and pretest mean, instead of comparing two different groups (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003, p. 160).

An important choice made in the study was to not involve a control group. The goal of the study is to measure potential increase in decentering scores before and after an intervention, meaning one compares the mean scores from the pretest to the posttest within the same group separated by time. Comparing the test scores this way indicates that the experimental group acts as their own control, and a control group was not seen as crucial to finding out whether the potential increase was significant. In such a quasi-experimental study, it is usually difficult to demonstrate a link between the experimental group and a control group, and they are difficult to compare. A strength of this study is, as mentioned, that the experimental group is their own control, and one compares the same participants to themselves. However, it does present the weakness of human error, having fewer subjects to collect data on, and the case of internal validity, which is further explained in sub-chapter 3.5.2. Within life-science and medical literature, this type of research design is not uncommon, as using the experimental group as its own control has been widely used (Bliley & Ferrans, 1993; Zou & Zhang, 2016; Duffy, Culp, Sand-Jecklin, Stroupe, & Lucke-Wold, 2016; Shek & Sun, 2012). This design type has also been used in several educational related studies (Bazyk et al., 2009; Brown & Bourke-Taylor, 2014), e.g. in the study on the *Effect of a Coteaching Handwriting Program for First Graders* (Case-Smith, Holland, Lane, & White, 2012). A main reason for this decision was that the pre- and posttests were not constructed around a topic that can be easily learned outside of the classroom by memorizing certain answers, and are thereby hopefully shielded from too many external factors influencing the results. Threats to validity and limitations are presented thoroughly in chapter 3.5.

### 3.2.2 Participant observation

The current study is labelled a quantitative study, as the data material is collected through quantitative research methods. However, the intervention part of this project also contains aspects of qualitative research methods, in form of participant observation. One will often find that some forms of data elicitation, especially interviews and observation, are traditionally labelled as common tools in qualitative data collection (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p.

186). A distinction is usually drawn between nonparticipant and participant observation, the latter referring to a situation where "the researcher is playing an established participant role in the scene studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 248). Atkinson and Hammersley argue that in a sense all social research is a form of participant observation, simply because we need to be a part of a social context to study it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 249). Participant observation was natural in this project. The observation part was carried out during the intervention, where their reactions were noted down to answer the second research question regarding how the pupils responded to developing decentering skills through working with a narrative.

The observation part of the current study is largely relative; in the sense that what is observed are specific participant responses, e.g. emotions such as rejection or surprise. This is the only aspect in which this study introduces an element of qualitative method. The goal of the observation was to describe how the participants responded to using literature to develop decentering skills, and evaluate whether it can be regarded as a useful teaching tool in primary school based on their attitudes. Straight after lessons, the reactions seen through observation were written down as field notes to supplement the other methodological tools. The experiences observed are naturally much richer than what was possible to capture in the field notes, so they only display the essence of what occurred during the intervention. The field notes contain mostly descriptions of incidents where participants respond to an activity, and not full conversations. In a study such as this, it is important that the researcher can give as objective and specific descriptions of the research situation as possible (Aspers, 2009, p. 7). It is crucial for the researcher to give an authentic and realistic description of what one has witnessed, both what was seen and heard.

After each finished lesson, notes were taken while the impressions were still fresh in mind. They were constantly reviewed during the writing process and analysis to shed some light on how the method worked with the experimental group. It is a challenging process to choose what to include and not. For the sake of organization, the field notes were based on categories created from the reactions of the participants, with explanatory descriptions of the situation. For example, if a pupil refused to do an activity, a specific word for that reaction was noted: e.g. *rejection*. Under this simple headline the emotion was elaborated upon, based on what the pupil had reacted to and what had been said in the teacher-pupil conversation that followed. The categories were decided through reflection upon the responses that occurred in the classroom, defined by the researcher.

## 3.3 Research method

To shed some light on the thesis at hand, a triangulation of methods was used. This provided the opportunity to explore the issues from multiple angles, also taking into consideration the observable phenomena. Thereby, the data captured both the own thoughts of the participants as well as their verbal or non-verbal reactions to the methods in interplay among their fellow pupils. In the following sub-chapters, the pre- and post-tests, group interviews, observation and use of sound recording during data collection is presented.

### 3.3.1 Pre- and post-tests

In order to clearly see how the decentering scores after each reading changed, it became necessary to use a pretest-posttest design, involving the calculation of the mean scores from a particular body (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 282). Most second language acquisition (SLA) meta-analyses have treated effects from both pretest-posttest designs as well as between-groups designs, but, as Mackey and Gass state, generally pretest-posttests designs tend to produce larger effects. The current study revolves around a comparison of pretest and post-test results in the experimental group alone. Basic pretest-posttest designs concern themselves with exactly this; addressing cases where one or more experimental groups are exposed to an intervention (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003, p. 159). The use of such tests is intrinsically linked to internal and external validity, which is further described in chapter 3.6 about ethical perspectives.

**Test conduction**

During data collection, both the pretest and posttest immediately followed a collective reading of the picturebook. Following the first reading was the pretest. The participants were given a sheet consisting of four short and precise questions. They were to be answered based on a picture from the book that was displayed on the smartboard. The questions asked were:

1. *What is happening in this picture?*
2. *What is Hector thinking and feeling?* (Protagonist)
3. *What is Chris thinking and feeling?* (Second character/antagonist)
4. *Why do you think they act the way they do?*

An important adaptation made at this stage was the opportunity for participants to write their answers in Norwegian. The English language proficiency in the class varied greatly, and it was seen as more important to ensure that every pupil would be able to answer

the questions, and for them not to have the language as a barrier, than for the test to be in English. As a result, most pupils answered in Norwegian, and only a couple chose to answer in English. The posttest, completed in week three, was in most ways identical to the pretest, only it included a different picture from the book. Using different pictures was seen as necessary to avoid the possibility of participants copying the answers they made a couple weeks earlier. Naturally, this also presents the possibility that the different pictures were either easier or more difficult to interpret by the participants, which could influence the complexity of their answers, but using different pictures was still viewed as a necessity due to the short time span between pre- and posttest. The tests were coded using numbers instead of names to ensure anonymity.

### 3.3.2 Group interviews and sound recordings

In hopes of providing extra strength to, or possibly to challenge, the pretest and posttest answers, rounds of group interviews were held, in groups of five or six. Each interview was based on exactly the same questions; the four questions asked during the pretest and posttest. The picture used would also be the same as on the tests. Using both the tests and group interviews allowed me to both have solid, written answers from each individual participant, but also helped me to see if any pupils changed their opinions or answered differently when put in a group with fellow pupils. The idea was for the group interview to either verify the answers to the pretests and posttests by showing that the pupils did in fact understand the task and agreed with their previous answers, or potentially show that they were not as skilled in decentering if the opposite happened, that is, changing their answers or being influenced by their fellow pupils.

The data material is collected from four set questions, making it necessary to ask the same questions during the interviews, to check whether or not they corresponded. This was done using a structured interview. The goal of these interviews was not to trace the participants' learning or narratively be able to describe how they see the world. Therefore, using a standardized interview was favourable, as is does not open up for follow-up questions or elaborations. The goal was to measure a specific ability and how this potentially develops through systematic activities. Interviews are very common in L2 research, and can often be quite revealing. Still, as Mackey and Gass argue, interviews are more helpful "when triangulated with other types of data", as is the case here (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 141).

As previously mentioned, sound recording is one of the methods of choice, used so that the researcher could transform oral speech into written documents. Using sound recording provided an opportunity to listen to the verbal answers of the participants and hear whether they indicate uncertainty, confidence, tone of voice etc. Participants sometimes find it easier to answer when they can talk freely, and not having to formulate a good answer in few words. Recording the group interviews opened up for this.

## 3.4 Research design

### 3.4.1 Participants

The participant group was a 5$^{th}$ grade class, twenty-two in number, from an ethnic diverse school in the Western part of Norway. Selection of participants was a case of convenience sampling; participants chosen based on accessibility and proximity to the researcher. The project was established during fall of 2015, and the parental and participant groups were informed of the topic and time frame of the project quite early in the semester. The chosen participant group was viewed as especially desirable due to the fact that the participants were ethnic diverse, as intercultural competence was the wide topic of the study. Cultures represented were e.g. Ethiopia, Philippines, Spain, Somalia, Iran, Sweden and Poland. Almost half of the pupils in the class were either half Norwegian or not Norwegian at all, and both staff at the school and the participants' parents therefore valued the topic of intercultural competence.

During most of the activities of the project, the participants were organized together as one group. Only during pre- and posttests and group interviews were they either seated individually or in smaller groups of 5-6. The collective readings of the book, discussions, intervention activities and so on, were all conducted together as a class, where the researcher led each activity.

### 3.4.2 Data collection

In addition to the pre- and post-tests and group interviews, field notes were used as supplement. Sound recording of the group interviews was an important source of data to the study, and recordings were stored on a password-protected computer. These recordings were deleted at the end of the project. The first group interviews directly succeeded the pre-test, but due to time constraints, the second group interviews, initially intended to directly succeed the post-test, were conducted one week after the post-tests. Data collection stretched over a

period of three weeks, two days a week in each of the three weeks. Each lesson lasted 45 minutes. After the data collection had ended, the interviews were transcribed, and the answers to the pre- and post-tests were transferred into electronic form. Thereafter, a period of analysis followed, by processing and discussing the findings. A summary of the findings is presented in the following chapter on results.

As the process table below illustrates, the data collection consisted of seven parts. It started with the first reading of the book, which was immediately followed by the pretest and group interviews. Then came the intervention process, which was again followed by a second reading of the book, posttest and another round of group interviews.

**Table 1**  The illustrated process of data collection

| Time | Week 1 | | | Week 2 | Week 3 | | |
|------|--------|--|--|--------|--------|--|--|
| Part | 1st reading | Pretest | Interviews | Intervention | 2nd reading | Posttest | Interviews |
| Procedure | Initial discussion of paratext. Collective reading and translation – participants read, they or teacher translate. Discussion of plot and characters to ensure understanding. | Answering four questions individually about a picture presented, in writing.<br><br>1. What is happening in this picture?<br>2. What is Hector thinking and feeling?<br>3. What is Chris thinking and feeling?<br>4. Why do you think they act the way they do? | Groups of five or six. Use of recording device. Researcher asks the same questions as during pretest to the same picture. Answer individually. | 1. Comic strip: telling the story from Hector's parents' view.<br><br>2. Plenary discussion<br><br>3. Writing task: short text telling the story from Chris' perspective | Second collective reading and translation – participants read, they or teacher translate. | Answering four questions individually about a picture presented, in writing. Different picture from the pretest.<br><br>1. What is happening in this picture?<br>2. What is Hector thinking and feeling?<br>3. What is Chris thinking and feeling?<br>4. Why do you think they act the way they do? | Groups of five or six. Use of recording device. Researcher asks the same questions as during pretest to the same picture. Answer individually. |
| Method | | | Structured interview | Participant observation | | | Structured interview |

## Process description

The participants were not provided with many details about the project before the data collection started. When presenting the topic to the participants, they were informed that they would be working with an English book about apartheid, and trying to look at the story from different perspectives. The title of the book was, as mentioned, not revealed until it was read together the first time, simply to avoid that any of them would read it beforehand. It was desirable that their first exposure to the story would be as genuine as possible. A short presentation of the book follows to set the context for the data material's background.

## The Soccer Fence

The book used in this study is a book from 2014 written by Phil Bildner. It depicts the story of Hector, a young black boy telling of the gradual breakdown of apartheid as he grows up.

He lives in a small Johannesburg township, and dreams of playing soccer on a real pitch with the white boys from another part of the city. As years pass and apartheid crumbles, the boys finally ask Hector to play with them. The story describes the way Mandela used sports to unite the people, using the relation between Hector and a white boy named Chris as an example. The book was chosen because of its short pieces of texts that were adaptable to the 5th grade classroom, because of big, expressive and colourful images, and, above all, that the story is about a boy the same age as the participant group, making it more relatable to the learners. It explains the circumstances of apartheid in a child-friendly way, but still presents important turning points and uses concrete visual aids to tell the story.

First reading and pretest

Data collection began with a first reading of the book *The Soccer Fence*. Six participants were not present during this lesson. We talked about the title, what it referred to and what we thought the story would be about. The participants talked among themselves about the illustrations and other pieces of information provided on the cover. A choice was made before project start not to teach the participants about apartheid beforehand. This was simply to avoid accidentally telling them or implying too much about the researcher's attitudes, which could influence their opinions about why the characters act the way they do in the story. Apartheid was also not the topic of the study, and the main teacher of the class agreed that it could be interesting to see how much history they learned solely by working with this book, without explicit teaching.

Although *The Soccer Fence* is a picturebook, the language can at times be above the 5th grade L2 level. Therefore, the group read each page in English, read either by a learner or by the teacher, and the page was translated into Norwegian to ensure that every learner fully understood the events and plot. Afterwards, a brief discussion was carried out about who the main characters were, where they were from, and other basic characteristics of the characters. Directly after the first reading of the book, the learners answered the pre-test individually, more elaborately described in sub-chapter 2.1

Group interviews and intervention

Next, the learners were divided into groups of five or six for the group interviews. The interviewees sat around a table at the front of the classroom, while the rest of the class spent time on a worksheet about the book and apartheid individually. During the interviews, the participants were showed the same picture as they had during the pretest, and were asked the

same four questions. They answered one at a time, also with the opportunity to answer either in English or Norwegian. Following the pre-test and first round of interviews was the intervention, which is more thoroughly explained in the following.

**Intervention**

The intervention was performed over a time frame of five 45 minute lessons. Mainly three activities were planned to try to develop decentering skills, with a few adjustments along the way.

1. Comic strip

The first activity the participants were to perform was to write a short comic strip where they retell the story from the view of Hector's (protagonist) parents. His parents are minor characters in the story, but are present in several parts of the book. The goal was to challenge the participants to see the given situation through the eyes of peripheral characters, and not depending solely on the information given through the main character. Seeing the story unfold through the parents' eyes would make the participants provide information based on their own imagination, not based on descriptions they were provided.
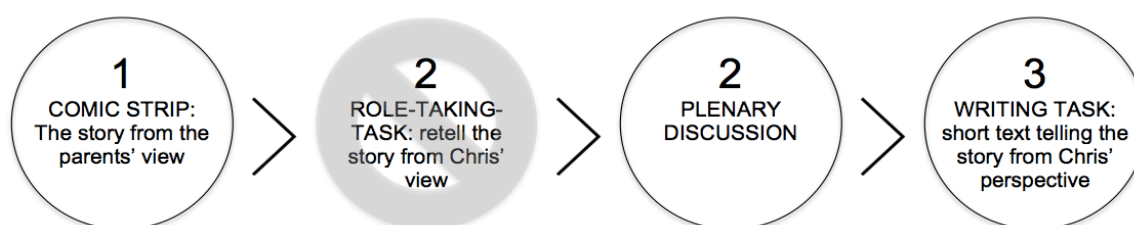


**Figure 2**  The intervention process in developing decentering skills

2. Role-taking task → Group discussion

The second activity was a role-taking task based on Feffer's system for measuring decentering (Burkman, 2008, p. 13). The participants were divided into groups and asked to re-enact the story, but from the perspective of Chris', the second character and in some ways the antagonist. Due to time constraints and other factors explained further in the results-chapter, this task was terminated earlier than planned. Instead, a group discussion was initiated where the participants discussed the following questions:

*1. What does Chris/the parents think about Hector?*

*2. What does Chris/the parents feel about apartheid?*

*3. How do you think Chris/the parents are as a person/people?*

The questions sought to challenge the ability of the participants to think the way both Chris and Hector's parents do. They were reminded not to think what they themselves thought about Chris, but try to get inside the character or characters' heads.

### 3. Writing a short text

The final task was a writing task where the participants were asked to write a short text telling the story from the perspective of Chris. They were asked to start at the beginning and tell the story of the book from how Chris would experience it. Initially, this text was to be written in English, which was the case for the stronger participants in the class, but some of the participants with lower English proficiency were allowed to write it in Norwegian.

### Post intervention

In the third week was a second reading of the book, followed by a post-test and another round of interviews. The pre- and post-tests were based on different pictures to avoid a replication of answers from week one. Limitations due to the use of different pictures are discussed in chapter five, but the choice not to use the same pictures was regarded to be most natural at the time.

## 3.5 Process of analysis

The main source of data to decide whether the findings were of statistic significance derives from the pre- and posttests. These results and the analysis will be presented in the chapters to come, but the following part sheds some light on how Melvin Feffer's Interpersonal Decentering Scoring System was used as a starting point for scoring the participants' test answers, as well as how these numerical values were used to find statistical answers to the first research question.

### 3.5.1 Criteria for decentering

An important part of investigating the ability to decenter was defining specific criteria to look for during data collection. Decentering is, as mentioned, quite an abstract skill and can be

very difficult to measure (Byram, 2008, p. 221). Therefore, it was important to early define what kinds of sentiments would be categorized as "decentered", or what questions would be necessary to ask in order to define statements as this. In 1959 Feffer expanded Piaget's definition of decentering into the interpersonal realm and symptomatology. He then went on to develop a scoring system for the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Role-Taking Task (RTT) to measure the interpersonal decentering (Burkman, 2008, p. 13). The RTT is a technique where participants are asked to retell a story from the viewpoint of each of the characters in the story. In this case, the participant is first asked to retell the story from the viewpoint of the main character Hector, and then from the viewpoint of the other boy in the book, Chris. Decentering is in RTT evaluated based on the extent of perspective taking on three levels: simple refocusing, consistent elaboration and change of perspectives. If the participant needs to refocus, meaning he or she is not able to follow their own train of thought, this would indicate inconsistent decentering, and consistent elaboration of the story would indicate a more balanced form of decentering (Burkman, 2008, p. 13). In addition to the evaluation of decentering based on the RTT technique, the basic TAT scoring system presents nine levels of decentering ability, based more on analysis of statements. Statements reacting to plot of the story represent a more primitive level of decentering and are given lower scores (1-4), anticipating the behaviour of the character indicates internalization and is slightly more advanced as it demonstrates the ability to think less egocentrically and multi-dimensionally, thus rewarded higher scores (5-9) (Burkman, 2008, p. 14). The highest level of decentering is expressed as: being able to differentiate the characters while simultaneously maintaining a complex relationship between them", as well as taking the context into consideration (Burkman, 2008).

Based on Feffer's scoring system for decentering shown in table 2 (p. 39), an example table for the different scores and categories was created in regards to this specific thesis (table 3, p. 41) This table ranges from score 1 to 9, 1 indicating the lowest level of decentering and 8 indicating the highest. Nine different hypothetical answers to the posttest-picture are exemplified to match each of the nine levels. In the following section, the scoring system developed by Feffer will be further explained, as well as the nine levels.

### 3.5.2 Feffer's Interpersonal Decentering

Feffer developed his system for decentering on the thoughts of Piaget that a person is more of less able to consider more than one perspective on a situation simultaneously (Leeper, Dobbs,

& Jenkins, 2007, p. 149). Feffer originally designed the scoring system based on *interpersonal* decentering; "the capacity to coordinate complementary roles in a social situation" (Leeper et al., 2007, p. 149). It has become a widely used system to test the ability to establish familial, friendly, romantic and business relationships within social research and psychology as well as to test the ages at which humans have the ability to change perspectives in given situations in their social development. The main area of interest when using this tool is that of *operational simultaneous thought*. The learners bring their own values and opinions into any situation, and are challenged to dismiss these in favour of another persons perspective for a short period of time. Decentering asks whethe the participants are able to both have their own predispositions and evaluate how an unfamiliar character views the presented situation at the same time. As we mature, we are able to advance to operationalize more abstract and less concrete situations, but theorists disagree about when these changes occur (Leeper et al., 2007, p. 149). This is what Feffer's Interpersonal Scoring System can help us decide. Based on Feffer's original scoring scheme, the current scheme was adjusted to this study (table 3, p.41). The levels and their labels/names have remained somewhat the same, but exemplified answers to each level were formulated to make it more precise when scoring, before the actual answers were reviewed. This way there would be a starting point about what to expect from each level and what separated them from each other. As Feffer used this in regards to *interpersonal* decentering, the examples and what is involved in each category have been altered to fit the present research. The original categories are shown in table 2 to show how the new table can be seen to correspond with Feffer's original table.

**Table 2**  Feffer's scoring categories for Interpersonal Decentering (Leeper, Dobbs & Jenkins 2007, p.152)

| Category | Name | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Undifferentiated relationship | "They like sports." |
| 2 | Nonreactive directional relationship | "She gives him food." |
| 3 | Reactive directional relationship | "She gives him food which he appreciates." |
| 4 | Interactive directional relationship | "She gives him food that he likes. She is glad." |
| 5 | Internalized other, simple representation | "He plans on telling her later." |
| 6 | Internalized other, surface characteristics | "He plans on telling her how she looks." |
| 7 | Internalized other, internalized state | "He plans on telling her when she feels better." |
| 8 | Internalized others | "He plans on telling her that Bill likes her." |
| 9 | Internalized self-other | "He felt he was wrong in telling her that." |

The decentering scores are arranged from 1-9. A score of 1 means the participant is only able to explain the actions in the picture, meaning an undifferentiated relationship and no decentering. The second lowest score indicates a response to what has happened, but there is only a reference to the actions that are viewed and no description of thought or feelings. Levels 2-4 are called sequential, as the situation is only seen from one of the two characters' view, and the participants are not able to respond to the relationship between the two. A score of 3 indicates that the participant is able to see an action and how it achieved a response, and a score of 4 tells us that the pupil can juggle an action that resulted in several responses. The categories are divided between the bottom four decentering levels and the five highest, more advanced levels. At score 5 the participant starts showing the ability to think like one or more of the characters might. This is why the five highest levels are labelled *simultaneous,* because they are able to take into consideration both actions, responses, as well as thoughts and feelings towards these. At level 6 and 7, the participants start to award personal attributes to the characters, such as kind, evil or scared. What divides the two is that a score of 6 only awards a characteristic to the second character seen from the protagonist's view, whereas in score 7 the protagonist actually imagines what the second character might think or feel. The absolute highest levels of decentering involve being able to put oneself into the protagonist's shoes and think what *he* would feel about the other characters. The thoughts of the protagonist are internalized, and they are able to think as the other characters in the story, not only the main character. At the highest level, score 9, the self-other (the thoughts and feelings of both the protagonist and the second character) is completely internalized. The final table showing the levels, labels and examples of answers to each stage is seen on page 41.

Each participant answers four questions in the pre- and posttest, and the final score of each participant is the average of these. Other scoring methods have been tried, e.g. Burkman's use of the "best effort", where the highest score of each participant is used, but using the overall mean to calculate the results was deemed the most appropriate in this study (Burkman, 2008, p. 29). Once the overall mean of each participant was thoroughly calculated, the need for a reliable statistical test presented itself. This was done using the paired samples t-test, explained in sub-chapter 3.5.2.

**Table 3** Decentering Scoring Scheme (Furnes, 2016)

| Score | Level | Category | Example of statement |
|:---:|---|---|---|
| 1 | None | Undifferentiated | "He stands by the fence." |
| 2 | Sequential | Action-reaction | "He stands by the fence and watches the game." |
| 3 | Sequential | Reactive directional | "He stands by the fence and wants to play." |
| 4 | Sequential | Multi-reactive | "He stands by the fence and wants to play, but the boys do not ask him." |
| 5 | Simultaneous | Anticipating | "Hector is shut out from the game." |
| 6 | Simultaneous | Emotional | "Hector is shut out, and he is sad because he is not allowed to play." |
| 7 | Simultaneous | Comparing | "Hector wants to play, but the boys do not ask him because he is different." |
| 8 | Simultaneous | Explanatory | "He wants to play, but the boys do not ask him because of apartheid." |
| 9 | Simultaneous | Contextual | "He wants to play, but the boys do not ask him to because they were not allowed to play with black people during apartheid." |

## 3.5.2 T-test

The t-test is used to compare the mean scores of e.g. two groups or the mean scores of one group, that is, scores between a pre- and posttest, both of which are relevant in this study (Brown, 2002, p. 248). The results were based on the overall score of each participant, summarizing the scores of each test to provide a total individual score. This value is checked for statistic significance using the *paired samples* t-test. The present study is a typical example of a data set that requires such an inferential statistics test, based on the assumption that one can reasonably expect one mean to be higher than the other. Participants were tested prior to a intervention period, and then tested again post intervention. This way we can use the participants themselves as their own control. One participant was removed from data analysis, due to missing data from the posttest. This reduces the sample size slightly in the following analysis (N=21). Statistical results are presented and explained in chapter 4.

## 3.5.3 Test and interview comparison

The pre- and posttest answer of each participant was measured against his or her interview answer and labelled either as *corresponding (C), not corresponding (N), partially corresponding (P)* or *(B)* for those who did not answer at all, i.e. *blank*. In addition, *C+* was an additional label given to those who showed more decentering during the interview than on

the test, and *C-* to those who showed more decentering on the test than in the interview. This is used to show specifically how the participants' answers corresponded with their interview answers on the different questions, and is analysed in chapter 4.

## 3.6 Ethical perspectives of research

While proceeding with this topic, the researcher has attempted to take into consideration any sensitive aspect and choose both words and actions with care, using Neuman's basic principles of ethical social research as a basis for the considerations (Neuman, 2007, p.60). The topic of the book, apartheid, is a sensitive and demanding topic for 5th graders, and was expected to receive reactions. Still, massive support from parents, professors and fellow teachers assured that the literary topic and the topic of the study were intrinsically linked and of great learning value to the participants, and so the project gained confidence. The topic of intercultural competence and decentering is extremely socially relevant today, and using more culturally realistic literature in the classroom has been widely argued for in recent years. It was believed throughout this project that the results could contribute positively to the pedagogical field and give better insight into the early stages of intercultural competence development.

### Reporting the project

There are several ethical aspects to consider in research, especially when it both involves sound recording, observation and when the researcher is the one to score the pre- and posttest. Before data collection could even start, the project was reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (Appendix 1). Especially the use of sound recording made it necessary to report the project. As required by NSD, consent forms (Appendix 2 and 3) were produced and distributed to the parents. Forms in both Norwegian and English were produced, as some of the parents did not speak or read sufficient Norwegian. All participants were allowed to participate by their parents, and forms were collected before data collection started. In cases with use of video or sound recordings, it is required that both parental and participant have consented, and that each participant is aware that they are a part of the project on a voluntary basis (Neuman, 2007, p. 54). Before project start, participants were informed that participation in the project was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason. It is the responsibility of the researcher to not abuse the natural power relations that exist both as a teacher and a

researcher, and make it clear that the participants have every right to pull out whenever they should desire to do so (Neuman, 2007, p. 49).

**Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

Several precautions are necessary to take when investigating a social context such as this. Even when participants know that they are being studied, they are not always informed of what exactly the researcher is looking for (Neuman, 2007, p. 57). Protecting the privacy and personal identification of the participants are imperative, and how this would be ensured was described in the consent forms. It is always the researcher's responsibility to protect every participant from public disclosure. Anonymity is another key aspect in research, and necessary steps were taken to protect their identity so that they would remain nameless (Neuman, 2007, p. 57). Each participant was awarded a number that was used to identify their pre- and posttests instead of using their names, and they were also carefully informed not to use the actual names of each other during the group interviews. Ensuring complete anonymity is naturally difficult with such a composition of participants. However, in this case, protecting the participants by giving them numbers was seen as helpful to reduce the chance of compromising their confidentiality. As far as the sound recordings go, they were stored on a password-protected computer, which only the researcher had access to. After ended research all recorded data material was transcribed and the recordings were deleted.

In both quantitative and qualitative research, it is necessary to ensure the validity and reliability of research. In short, validity refers to whether the method actually measures what it intended to measure, while reliability is about the credibility of the final results (Mackey & Gass, 2012, p. 203). The following parts of the chapter will address whether the research has been conducted in a trustworthy manner, and whether the results can be deemed believable to generalize to a bigger population.

### 3.6.1 Parental consent

The use of sound recordings of the group interviews gave the research more opportunities for information, but it also made it necessary to take precautions. An important job prior to the data collection was the collection of parental consent. The participants all spoke Norwegian fluently, but the same did not go for the parents. During the parent-teacher conference where the project was presented to the parent group, several translators were brought in to translate the discussion, and this meant that consent forms had to be produced in both Norwegian and

English. Forms were handed out to all the parents who were present at the conference and forms were sent home with the participants whose parents had not been able to come. Collecting the consent forms turned out to be quite time consuming, and the final forms were collected just days before the data collection was scheduled to start. Still, all the parents agreed to letting their son or daughter participate, making planning the lessons much easier. No alternative lesson plans were required, and the entire class would perform the same tasks and activities. Parental contact in intercultural research can be very demanding, because it deals with several cultures and languages in the study. Dealing with several languages, makes it important to consider how information is given and how the research is conducted. After collecting the consent of each participant in the class, the data collection stage was planned, which will be explained in the following sub-chapter.

## 3.6.2 Validity

The scoring categories in question have previously been used in other both big and small studies (Burkman, 2008; Fincher, 2012) since Feffer and Jahelka developed this scoring scheme in 1968, and the categories literally correspond to "both sequential and simultaneous cognitive processing" (Leeper et al., 2007, p. 153). The scoring categories are based on the general cognitive development of human beings, and have been used in clinical trials to compare the results to people with different mental disorders, e.g. schizophrenia or children with high risk of psychosis. It is still, as far as available research shows, the first time it is used in a teaching setting such as this, with this particular topic.

The validity of any study rests on the people involved, and, in this case, especially the researcher's own ability to analyse the data as closely to the scoring categories as possible without bias. How results have been processed and scored, is probably what will have the biggest consequences regarding the final results that are presented. Because of this, it would be difficult to say whether the same results would be achieved in a different participant group and with different researcher. What strengthens the validity of the study is, as mentioned, the fact that the same scheme that is used here has been used in other empirical studies, e.g. Carberry (1982), Dobbs et.al. (2004) and Strober (1979), as listed by Leeper et.al. (2007, p. 153). The fact that it has been used several times before does add to the validity, as opposed to if criteria were to be produced from scratch. However, Leeper et.al. also emphasize that for studies of greater expansion, the examples presented would not suffice as support for the validity (2007, p. 153). More nonclinical examples of the use of these decentering categories

would be favourable, e.g. in relation to social competence and insight (Leeper et al., 2007, p. 155).

An element that also can influence the validity is that of researcher impact. As the researcher was also the teacher of the experimental group at the time, would arguable mean that the research situation was not very different from their traditional setting, and the presence of the researcher would therefore not impose too much artificiality on the situation. The participants in the experimental group already knew the researcher, were familiar with the setting in which the research took place and were comfortable in the situation.

The fact that a mixed approach to data collection was used, provided the opportunity to not only rest the answers on one source alone, but also to support or challenge the findings through the following group interviews. The scoring scheme was read and evaluated by other master's students who provided advice on how to avoid wrong scoring. There are probably more adaptations that could have been made along the way other than the ones made presently, but given the lack of research using this method with this topic, controlling whether all goals of the research have been met or not is a challenging task. The final experience is still that the methodology and activities used have measured what it set out to do, and rests on solid data collected in a proper manner. Whether this example of research is representative under different circumstances can not be confirmed until other studies on the same topic have been conducted.

An important aspect is that of internal validity. Using a single experimental group without control group questions whether there is bias with selection of participants. In addition, one might question how one can be sure that it is the intervention that influences the experimental group and not something else, such as the environment or the procedure of testing. However, in this case, the pre- and posttests are not constructed around a topic that can be easily learned outside of the classroom by memorizing certain answers, and are thereby hopefully shielded from too many external factors influencing the results.

### 3.6.3 Reliability

When researching the topic of decentering, it was deemed necessary to use several sources to find answers to the thesis questions. Using both tests and interviews provided a richer understanding of the participants' answers and how they responded to this teaching method. The choice of methods was made in collaboration with a mentor and through advice from other master's students. Although these methods were the ones deemed the most appropriate

to find answers to the research questions, there are limitations. The described situations and answers are provided under the guidance of the researcher. In such a project, there is always the danger of presenting a topic with bias or over-emphasising what should or should not be done. An important strength is still that the questions to the pre- and posttest, the main source of data, do not have right or wrong answers. Words were chosen carefully when participants asked the researcher to clarify questions or what to answer on the tests, and having an assistant or the contact teacher in the room helped to avoid leading answers.

To check reliability in coding, two other master's students were approached to score examples of participant answers according to the categories on the adapted scoring system. They were briefly trained in the scoring system and what divided the different categories. First, the examples were scored before the researcher had started scoring the answers, and thereafter they provided advice on potential pitfalls to avoid during scoring. This was to avoid the researcher influencing their scoring to get scores that were already set. After the researcher had scored all the answers, a second scoring of examples by the master's students was carried out to see if scores were similar. Although the scoring process was done with as great care and precision as possible, the possibility of misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the answers exists. The fact that several master level researchers were involved in the process to ensure that coding went on in an appropriate manner still helped to strengthen the reliability of the study.

### 3.6.4 Generalizability

Due to the lack of research on the topic of decentering in a classroom situation, the aspect of generalizability is a topic for discussion. Although the coding process has been used in several different contexts, the results from the pre- and posttests are still based on this particular group, and are influenced by how the researcher communicated the topic and tasks. As previously stated, any study rests on the people that perform it, and results may have been different under the guidance of a different researcher or with different participants. Generalization of the results from this study is limited due to these exact factors. However, it can be argued that the findings can be of inspiration and interest in other learning contexts. The pre- and posttest, interviews and intervention process tell us something about the respective participants experiences with and interpretations of the world as well as literature, which is greatly subjective. However, it is still arguable that the results from this study can contribute to the understanding of how important intercultural competence can be in

education today. Without regard for the results, the study alone contributes with suggestions and approaches to how one can use literature to teach about cultures, tolerance, perspectives and stepping out of one's egocentric view on a situation. It can be valued as a pedagogical tool favourable in the classroom, and hopefully be a way to further develop thoughts about intercultural competence and communication. Though a critical eye on any study such as this is necessary, as every study has its limitations, it can be argued that necessary research ethical precautions have been made when carrying out this project, and that it has indeed measured what it sought to measure.

# 4. Results and analysis

## 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter is divided into two parts based on the two research questions. Part one deals with the first research question, the main topic of this thesis: *Is there an increase in decentering skills after the second reading of the book?* It contains results and analysis of data from the pre- and posttests involving a presentation and analysis of the findings from the paired samples t-test, as well as results from two rounds of group interviews. Part two of the chapter seeks to answer the second, and supplemental, research question: *What is the nature of the participants' responses to this teaching tool?* The goal of the second question is to evaluate how decentering is received in practice, thereby being an evaluation of the teaching method used. The different methodological parts of the study are viewed both individually and as a whole, to see the research study from different angles, in order to gain as full an understanding as possible.

## 4.2 Part one: Is there an increase in decentering skills?

The following sub-chapter shows an analysis of both the statistical results from processing the pretest and posttests, as well as a comparison of answers from tests and interviews.

### 4.2.1 Pre- and posttest findings

For the pretest, the mean score calculated for the 21 participants was 17.81 (SD = 4.45). The posttest yielded a mean score of 24.19 (SD = 6.19). The t-test showed that the difference in mean score between the two tests was statistically significant. The paired samples t-test provided a probability value below 0.01, and is thus considered by conventional criteria to be highly significant, with a confidence interval calculated from the mean at 95% CI.

**Table 4**  Results from the participants' paired samples t-test

| Source | N | Mean | SD | 95% CI | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** | 21 | 17.81 | 4.45 | | | |
| **Posttest** | 21 | 24.19 | 6.19 | | | |
| **Difference** | | 6.38 | 1.1527 | [-8.66, -4.10] | 5.84 | < 0.01 |

The mean difference in scores between the two tests is 6.38. From the provided statistics, one can therefore say that the decentering scores post intervention compared with scores prior to the intervention have increased on a noteworthy level; $t$(df=20) = 5.84, $p = < 0.01$, 95% CI [-9.742, -3.018]. In addition, the effect size computed using Cohen's $d$ equals 1.187 (95% confidence intervals: 0.259–2.114). This is a very large effect size, providing sufficient foundation to argue that there is in fact a consistent score increase between the pretest and posttest.

## Distribution of scores from pre- and posttest

When looking at the distribution of scores from 1–9, we see a clear change from pretest to posttest scores. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the pretest scores, where the four questions are abbreviated to Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4. The value of zero is included in cases where participants either had no answer, or if their answers were not understandable to the researcher.
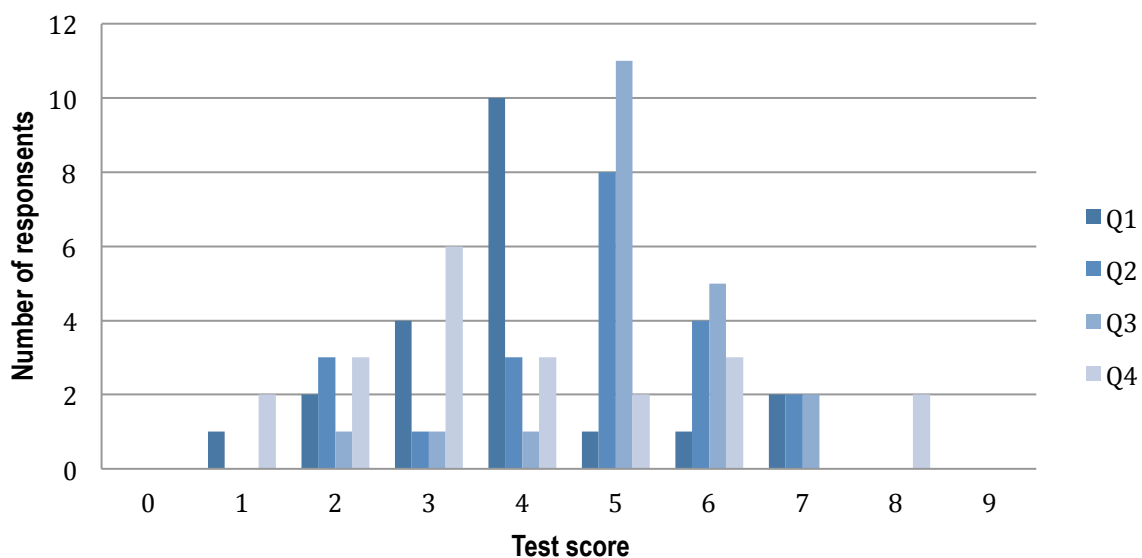


**Figure 3** Distribution of scores in the participants' pretest answers

Figure 3 shows that the scores from the pretest lay on the middle of the scoring scale. There is a clear cluster centred around the border between sequential and simultaneous decentering skills, indicating that the decentering skills of the participants before the intervention were average. This indicates that there *was* a level of decentering among the participants even before the intervention process started, but also that it had room for improvement. When
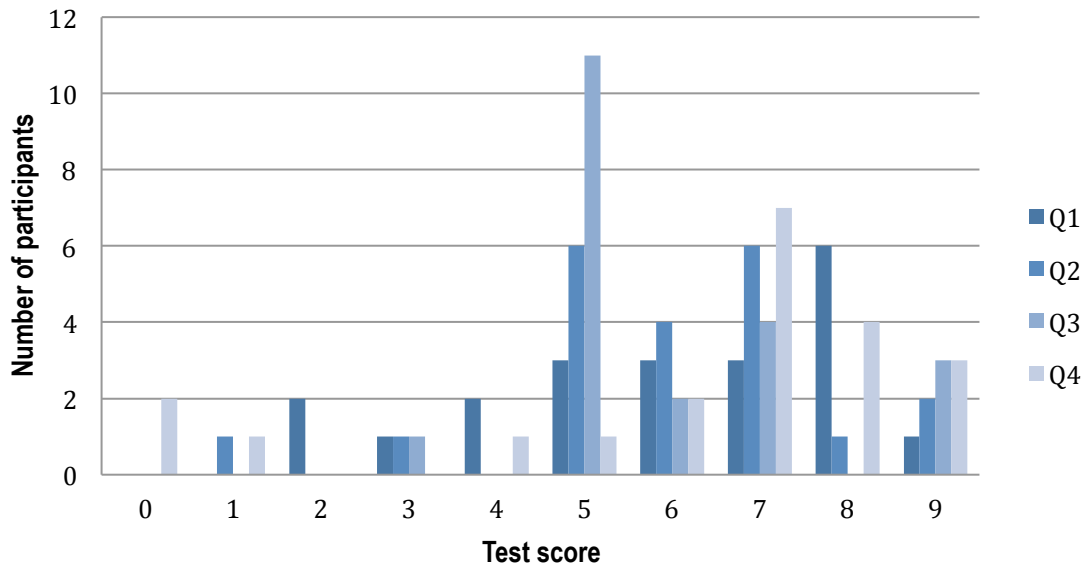
**Figure 4** Distribution of scores in the participants' posttest answers

comparing this to the distribution of scores from the posttest, displayed in figure 4, one clearly sees the increase. Very few participants received scores below 5, being the sequential level, and the majority of scores are found on the top half of the scoring system. The cluster has moved from the middle of the scale to the higher scores, as the majority of the scores are found from a score of 5 to 9. One also sees that the highest score of 9 was awarded to a total of 9 participants on the posttest, while no participants reached this level on the pretest. These results would indicate that the overall mean scores of the individual participants have increased in most cases, which is further highlighted in figure 5, which shows a comparison of the mean scores of the two tests.

## Levels of improvement

When comparing the overall mean score of each participant from pretest to posttest, one sees more clearly that the participants' decentering scores have increased the intervention. Figure 5 shows the mean score of each participant from pretest (dark) and posttest (light), and the individual increase per participant is shown in figure 6. P, in the figure, stands for participant; followed by the number they were assigned. Three participants received a lower mean score on the posttest than they did on the pretest, whereas the remaining eighteen participants increased their decentering skills. This suggests that the intervention did indeed have an impact on the participants' ability to decenter for nearly every participant. Still, the fact that three participants actually decreased in decentering scores suggests that the activities chosen do not work for everyone, and that there are limitations with this teaching method when it

comes to reaching every participant.
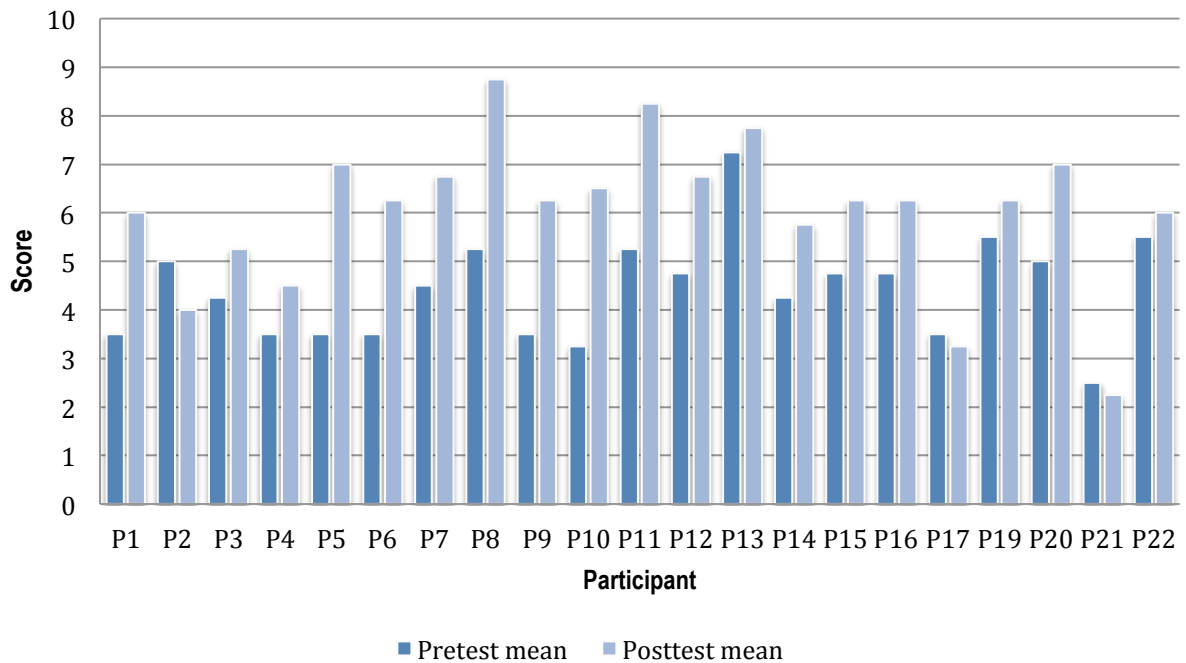


**Figure 5**  Comparison of participants' pretest and posttest mean scores

Figure 6 below shows specifically the increase or decrease in scores that each participant had from pretest to posttest. This relation is measured by comparing the results from the pretest and posttest, and calculating the difference. In all cases but three, this value is found on the positive side of the scale. More than half of the participants have improved their decentering skills by at least two scores, if not more. However, we see that there are examples of participants who have only increased slightly or not at all.
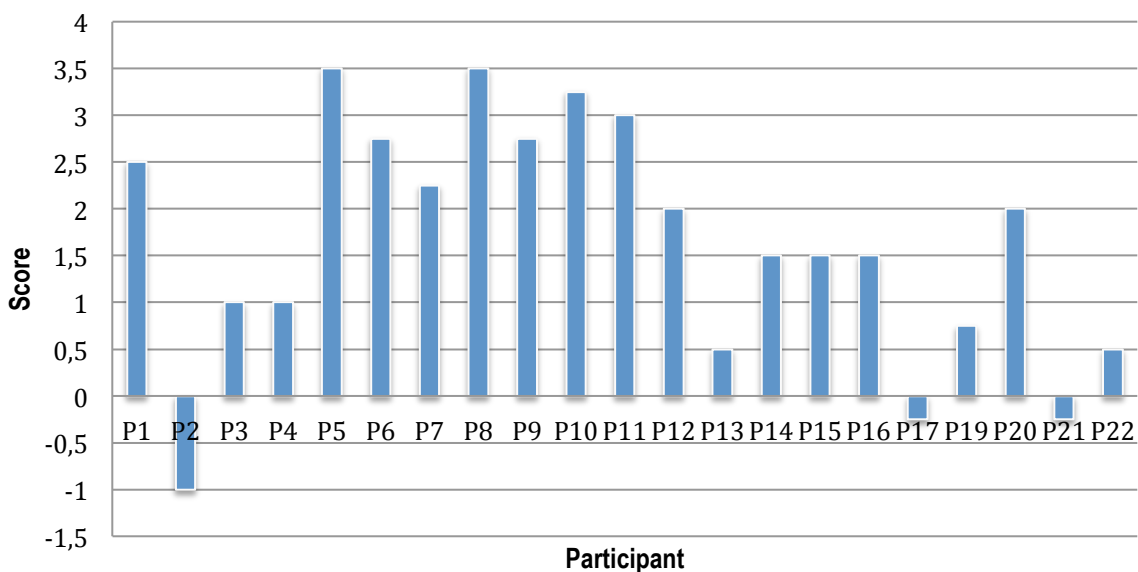


**Figure 6**  Individual improvement rate per participant from pretest to posttest

The statistics suggest that there is a significant increase in decentering scores on the posttest in comparison with the pretest. However, in order to support or challenge these numbers and statistics, it is necessary to look at the interviews conducted after each test, and investigate whether these skills can be supported by participants' answers when in a group with other learners.

### 4.2.2 Interviews in comparison with test answers

The main goal of the group interviews was to determine whether the participants' answers on the tests were supported by their answers in a collective discussion, or if they changed their answers from the test. There is always the possibility of influence from others, or we might adapt our opinions based on the collective views (Turner, 2010, p. 758). This research double checks whether or not participants were consistent in their opinions and level of decentering, even if opposing views surrounded them. The following sub-chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 is a discussion of each of the four test questions, with examples of answers from the pretest and the interview. These answers are compared to see if they correspond. Part 2 is a similar discussion of the four questions, but with examples from the posttest and its group interviews. These are also compared to see if they correspond.

On all the questions, both from pretest and posttest, the majority of the interview answers correspond with the tests. The different parts first exemplify this pattern, and exceptions to this general trait are then portrayed to show the nuances. Answers from every participant are included at least once. Tables 5 (p.53) and 6 (p.59) show in summary the distribution of participants with *corresponding (C)* answers, awarded if the test answer and interview answers match, *partially corresponding (P)* answers, awarded if parts of the answers correspond, *not corresponding (N)* answers, awarded if the answers do not match, and *blank (B)* answers. *Blank* was awarded if the answers were incomplete or not understandable, and if the participant did not answer at all. In addition, those who had corresponding answers, but also showed more or less decentering during the interview than on the test were given *C+* or *C-*. *C+* indicates more decentering, whereas *C-* indicates less decentering. In the tables, questions are shortened to Q, and the numbers indicate answers in each category.

### Results from pretest and first interviews

Table 5    Results from analysis of pretest and interview correspondence

| Pretest and interview results | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **C** | **P** | **N** | **B** | | **C+** | **C-** |
| **Q1** | 15 | 1 | | 5 | | 2 | 1 |
| **Q2** | 15 | 1 | 2 | 3 | | 2 | |
| **Q3** | 14 | | 2 | 5 | | 3 | |
| **Q4** | 12 | 1 | 6 | 2 | | 1 | |

To a great extent, the first round of interviews corresponded with the participants' answers on the pretest. The general answers of the participants on the pretest and in the interview were highly descriptive, although several included personal characteristics such as *happy* and *excited*. The majority still did not take into consideration the background of the story, apartheid, when answering their questions. The exceptions that deviate from this tendency are mentioned, and suggest that, if the interview answers were to be scored, the mean score of both individual participants *and* the group as a whole would have been slightly higher. In the following section, findings from each question on the pretest are presented systematically, and examples are found at the end of the discussion of each question.

*Question 1: What is happening in this picture?*
On this question, 15 participants' interview answers corresponded with their pretest answers, 5 gave a blank answer, 1 participant's answer partially corresponded, whereas 2 showed more, and 1 showed less, decentering skills during the interview than on the test. The average score from the pretest to question one came out at a 3.9 out of 9, indicating that a majority of the participant group received scores at the sequential level between 1 and 4.

The majority of the participants gave a similar version of their pretest answer in the group interview, and a characteristic tendency was a description of what the participants observed in the image. The majority was able to describe how the actions in the picture generate several responses from the boys and that they are happy, but few go as far as to explain *why*. This general pattern is shown in examples 1 and 2 below.

Despite the descriptive tendencies, there were cases, e.g example 3, where the participant showed a slightly more interpretive ability, as he involved other factors, such as personal attributes, for example *joy*, as exemplified below. There were also two cases in which a participant gave an answer in the group interview that would have received either a

higher or lower score than what they achieved on the test. This is shown in example 4. In this case, the pretest answer displays a deeper ability to explain the surrounding factors influencing the actions than what can be empirically seen on the picture. His pretest answer received a score of 7, as his answer contains an imagination of what the characters actually might think or feel. His interview answer, however, does *not* touch on any aspects of thought or personal attributes, and would be awarded a score of 4. In addition, this participant was the very first in his group to answer the question during the interview, and is therefore not influenced by the answers of fellow participants.

In summary, with a small handful of exceptions, most participants strictly explained what they observed in the picture as an answer to question 1, and therefore received average decentering scores, that showed room for improvement.

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**Examples:**

**1) Pretest**: "Hector lifts his hand up in the air and Chris does the same. They are happy about the day." (P14)
**Interview**: "Hector and that white boy is at a soccer match, and then they see each other and raise their hands because they have seen each other before. And then their team wins." (P14)

**2) Pretest**: "Hector lifts up his hands with that blond boy." (P21)
**Interview**: "The blond boy and that black boy have their hands up." (P21)

**3) Pretest**: "Chris and Hector lift their hands up out of joy." (P3)
**Interview**: "Chris and Hector raise their hands in the middle of the game when Bafana Bafana scores." (P3)

**4) Pretest**: "Hector meets Chris at the final of the African Championship. They have the same sector and cheer for the same team, Bafana Bafana. They lift their hands because they want to be together and say hi." (P13)
**Interview**: "The two boys see each other in the final, and they have the same team, so they raise their hands." (P13)

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*Question 2: What is Hector thinking in this picture?*
15 answers corresponded, 2 answers did not correspond, 1 corresponded partially and 3 gave blank answers to question 2. In addition, 2 showed more decentering skills during the interview than on the pretest. The average score per participant was slightly higher for question 2, coming out at an average of 4.7 out of 9 possible. This indicates that more participants received a higher score, but results also show that no participants came above a

score of 7 on this question.

Very few participants explained the relation between the two boys with emphasis on the apartheid context, but several still showed an ability to express Hector's thoughts specifically, e.g. through lines such as: "Hey, I have seen him before!" or "Cool, we are on the same team". During the interviews, more participants also expressed that they thought the boys were on their way to becoming friends than on the pretest. However, due to the descriptive tendencies, the average score remained at the sequential level.

Example 5 and 6 below, refer to participants who showed a stronger decentering ability during the interview than on the test. Participant 12's pretest score on question 2 was 4, as he only described viewable actions in his answer. This answer merely describes events that have occurred or can be seen, and do not present any thoughts or feelings that Hector may have, which is why it is considered sequential. However, during the interview, he shows a greater ability to consider Hector's thoughts in the light of the surrounding circumstances. Exceptions such as this are important to mention, because it shows that there are potential pitfalls when using tests that call for elaborate descriptions. It also shows how interviews such as these can be of great importance to shed additional light on short and simple answers, such as on the pretest.

In summary, despite the exceptions to question 2, e.g. example 5 and 6, where a couple of participants received scores of 6 and 7, the average score of the group, and the general descriptive tendencies in the answers, remain at the border between the sequential and simultaneous level.

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**Examples:**

**5) Pretest**: "He is thinking: There is that boy from the field." (P5)

**Interview**: "I remember that they had just scored and then suddenly he feels that they have almost become friends because he has seen Chris on the field before." (P5)


**6) Pretest**: "That he sees the blonde boy who plays on the field outside the garden of his mom's work." (P12)

**Interview**: "I think he remembers the boy from outside his mother's yard, from the good field, and thinks that now...now they can maybe become friends and he can be allowed to play." (P12)

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*Question 3: What is Chris thinking in this picture?*

On the third question, 14 participants gave answers that corresponded, 2 did not correspond, 5

gave blank answers, and 2 gave answers in the interview valued as C+. The average score on question 3 was 5.1, meaning an average score almost exactly at the border between sequential and simultaneous level. Question 2 and 3 were almost identical in formulation, but an important distinction is that, unlike Hector's feelings, Chris' feelings are never described in the book. Hector is the protagonist in the story, and his feelings are in many cases more clearly explained, contrary to Chris' feelings. This question therefore required a higher level of decentering skills from the participants, making it all the more interesting that the average score on question 3 was higher than on question 2.

Many scores were on the border of sequential and simultaneous, and imagining what the character thought did not seem to be a problem. However, merely stating that they were happy because the team scored or seeing a familiar face was not awarded scores above levels 5 or 6. The participants showed a greater ability to think like one or more of the characters, namely Hector and Chris, but a line was drawn between expressing what they thought and explaining more thoroughly the relation between the two set in apartheid context. Example 7 shows a typical score 5 answer, as he imagines what Chris is thinking, but not in relation to the apartheid context, and without regard to personal attributes. Another is example 8, where, in a few more words, the participant partially repeats his pretest answer, which lacks important descriptive information.

Answers that included apartheid context were rare, yet did occur. An example of one such answer is example 9, as P5 he was the only participant to mention anything about the fact that they made contact could be due to apartheid crumbling. Example 10 is an answer that is deemed not to correspond, as none of the aspects of her pretest answer are repeated during the interview.

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**Examples:**

**7) Pretest:** "Hey, I know who that it! That is that boy from the fence down on the field." (P7)
**Interview: "**He thinks he remembers the boy from the fence." (P7)


**8) Pretest**: "Hector and he (Chris) are thinking the same thing." (P9)
**Interview**: "Chris is doing the same thing...thinking about their team that is winning." (P9)


**9) Pretest:** "There is that kid that mom tells me I should not care about." (P5)
**Interview:** "I can not be with him". I think he thinks that. But he still wants to." (P5)

**10) Pretest**: "Oh, there is that boy who always stands outside the soccer fence all the time." (P19)

**Interview**: "I think he looks happy and is happy because they won. They have scored." (P19)

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*Question 4: Why do you think they act the way they do?*

Question 4 was the one to indicate most strongly, in a sense, whether the participants were able to take the surrounding context of the characters' actions into consideration. If the participants answered the question with: "because the team won" or "because they are happy", they would not receive the highest scores. "Because they are happy" presents simple, personal characteristics, indeed, but still fails to explain the layers to this situation. An answer explaining that they act the way they do because apartheid is finally crumbling and the boys have a chance to become friends, would deserve one of the highest scores.

12 participants gave answers to the test and interview that corresponded, 1 partially corresponded and 2 gave blank answers. 6 set of answers did not correspond, and only 1 participant was showing more decentering skills during the interview than on the test. The final question on the pretest yielded an average score of 3.9 out of 9. This is clearly on the sequential part of the scale, indicating that the majority of participants either said that the winning football team was the reason for their hand gesture, or they simply did it because the boys were happy, which did not take into consideration the reasons why or the relational circumstances. Example 11, 12 and 13 below show participants who gave such answers.

Only two participants included the underlying factor of apartheid and segregation as a reason why these boys acted the way they did on the pretest. However, during the interviews, two participants showed greater decentering skills by including this as a reason for their actions, as shown in example 14. Participant 22's answers are examples of ones that only partially correspond. On her pretest, P22, seen in example 15, answered why both Hector and Chris act the way they do in the picture, but during the interview she only explains Chris actions', and not Hector's.

When answering this question during the interviews, there were several cases where – despite instructions to specifically formulate individual answers – participants agreed to the previous statements and then added on another piece of information. Exchanges of opinions such as: "They like football." (P21). "Yeah, and they have seen each other before. That is nice to do, what, uhm...polite?" (P1), happened a few times. One participant would start with an answer to the question, which one or more of the other participants in the group would agree with, and potentially add on another aspect to the answer. This was not the general trend with the other

questions, but did occur on two occasions.

In summary, the pretest generally indicated that the group had a lot of room for improvement on their decentering skills. The interviews provided support that for a majority of the participants, this was still the case, but that there were individual cases where the participants seemed to possess greater decentering skills than what they had shown on the pretest. The goal for the intervention process was to challenge the participants to look beyond what they could see in the picture, to look beyond the obvious sides to the situation, and dig deeper into the layers of what these characters were thinking and feeling, as well as *why*. The statistics show that this ability was strongly improved, and the second round of interviews also supported this, as explained in the following.

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**Examples:**

**11) Pretest**: "Because they are cheering." (P5)

**Interview**: "Because they are at a football game and cheering." (P5)


**12) Pretest**: "I think they act that way because its only about football almost." (P6)

**Interview**: "They act that way because…because that is what you do at a football game." (P6)


**13) Pretest**: "They raise their hands/fists because their team, Bafana Bafana, won." (P9)

**Interview**: "Because their team won…the Bafana-team." (P9)


**14) Pretest**: "I think they do it because they are happy to see each other and they do it so that the other one will see him." (P11)

**Interview**: "They are showing that they can be friends despite of apartheid…and that it isn't finished maybe." (P11)


**15) Pretest**: "I think Chris acts the way he does because he has realised that Hector is a nice boy. And Hector acts the way he does because he finally has friends and can play with them." (P22)

**Interview**: "Because he has actually thought that Hector was kind and he is, so, yeah…therefore they can finally be with each other. And then Chris had gotten a new friend." (P22)

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**Table 6** Results from analysis of posttest and interview correspondence

| Posttest and interview results | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | C | P | N | B | | C+ | C- |
| Q1 | 13 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | 8 | |
| Q2 | 13 | 2 | 1 | 5 | | 2 | 1 |
| Q3 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 6 | | 1 | |
| Q4 | 13 | | | 8 | | 7 | |

## Results from posttest and second interviews

*Question 1: What is happening in this picture?*

On the first question, 13 participants gave answers that corresponded, 2 did not correspond, 2 partially corresponded, and 4 gave no answer. Also, a staggering 8 participants gave interview answers that showed more decentering skills than on the test. This question yielded an average score of 6 out of 9, a 2.1 increase from the same question on the pretest. The participants' ability to decenter had thereby increased. Examples from the posttest show this, as the answers are more interpretative and less descriptive, less concerned about actions and responses, and explaining more feelings and thoughts. The interviews also, in most cases, support these answers, e.g. example 16, where P14 has corresponding answers, yet his interview answer also includes extra information that his posttest answer does not.

Examples such as number 17 and 18, show that the participants have advanced in not just describing the viewable actions in the picture, but also in actually explaining the situation while taking into consideration the circumstances. Only four participants received scores below the simultaneous line on the posttest, who gave answers such as example 19. His answers do not correspond, as his interview answer nowhere near repeats his posttest answer. The posttest-answer is merely describing viewable actions in the picture, with no regard for feelings, thoughts or the circumstances of apartheid in the situation. However, as the example shows, P3 delivered a more elaborate answer during the interviews that would have been awarded a higher score. Participant 3 is also an interesting example, as his answers became more and more advanced throughout the interview. The instructions were for each participant to deliver their answer once, but in the interview conversation below, one sees how the thoughts of his co-participants affect P3 and his opinions. This development occurred at only a couple of occasions, but showed an interesting development in P3's understanding of decentering.

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**Examples:**

**16) Posttest**: "Hector is watching the other kids who are different in skin colour and wants to join in and play soccer." (P14)

**Interview**: "Uhm, he looks at the two boys, Chris and a brown guy. Brown guy. Dark, brown hair, and he wants to join. So Hector is really sad and no one listens to him. Meaning he is air." (P14)


**17) Posttest**: "Hector is depressed that he can not join and they ignore him." (P9)

**Interview**: "He is...what is happening in the picture is that he really wants to play football with the other boys, but they do not want to be with him. Maybe his parents have said that those with dark skin are bad people...that you must never talk to them and stuff. And maybe those kids do not understand that it is wrong, and he really wants to play with them, but he is not allowed." (P9)


**18) Posttest**: "Hector is sad because he is not allowed to play football with the white boys who play a game on the field beside him." (P16)

**Interview**: "Hector is shut out because before, black people did not have the same rights as the white, and he is shut out because of it." (P16)


**19) Pretest:** Hector is thinking and holding a ball." (P3)

**Interview:** "Hector is standing outside the fence and wants to play, but the boys inside the fence, for example Chris, will not let him play." (P3)


**Interview conversation:**

P3: "Hector is standing outside the fence and wants to play, but the boys inside the fence, for example Chris, will not let him play."

P7: "And he is sad."

P13: "Yes he is sad. And it is mostly because of the apartheid that was in those days."

P3: "Oh yeah… Chris and them have light skin and Hector does not, so they shut him out because of the soccer."

*(A few more participants answer the question before P3 summarises the talk.)*

P3: "Hector is outside the fence and wants to play, but the boys inside the fence, Chris for instance, do not let him play because he has dark skin. Done."

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*Question 2: What is Hector thinking in this picture?*

Also on this question, 13 participants gave answers that corresponded, 1 set did not correspond, 2 partially corresponded and 5 did not answer during the interview. 2 interview

answers showed greater decentering ability than on the test, whereas 1 answer showed less. The average score yielded 6 out of 9 on the second question as well. This is an increase of 1.3 from the pretest, and the test showed that only two participants were awarded scores on the sequential level, but that also only three reached the very highest scores, namely 8 and 9. As the examples show, there were a range of different answers within the scores of 5-7, e.g. example 20, 21 and 22, who all imagined what Hector is thinking or involves personal attributes, but fail to explain it in apartheid context.

Example 20 shows posttest- and interview answers that are deemed to correspond, as she basically repeats the same answer twice. Both example 21 and 22 show answers that are slightly different in formulation and content, but none of the answers would receive scores above 7. Explaining that Hector is sad or feels left out was the general variant of the majority's answers, though there were exceptions that managed to explain the circumstances of the story, and were awarded scores of 8 or 9, here seen in example 23 and 24.

Example 23 and 24 have slightly different formulations of their answers, but the content remains more or less the same both on the posttest and interview. They are deemed to partially correspond, and they also contain important aspects that this question was looking for: namely, explaining Hector's thoughts and feelings set in apartheid context, which is why these received high scores. In addition, as with the other questions, the interviews showed examples that collided with the typical scores of 5 and 6. The interviews indicated a generally greater ability to decenter among the majority of participants compared to their posttest answers. This is shown in example 25, 26 and 27. Examples such as these support the claim made initially in this subchapter, that if the interviews were to be scored, the decentering average would be slightly higher than on the posttest. They show that children at this age *are* able to take several perspectives into consideration, as well as external factors, not just what they can visually see.

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**Examples:**

**20) Posttest:** "He wishes that he could be with the others and play." (P20)

**Interview:** "He wants to be with the white and play." (P20)

**21) Posttest:** "I think he is thinking that he is lonely and is not allowed to play. And that he has nobody to play with." (P22)

**Interview:** "That he is, kind of, left out, and why is he not allowed to play...or, why is he left out?" (P22)

**22) Posttest:** "He is thinking that he wants to join in the football but is not allowed." (P10)

**Interview:** "He is sad that he is not allowed to be with them." (P10)


**23) Pretest:** "He is probably thinking that if he could be allowed to play it would be fun, and that they do not listen to him because he has a different skin colour." (P12)

**Interview:** "Yeah, he thinks it is unfair that he can not play just because he has a dark skin." (P12)


**24) Pretest:** "He is thinking it is unfair that he is not allowed to play just because of apartheid." (P8)

**Interview:** "He feels...he is pretty sad, and is thinking: Why is there apartheid?!" (P8)


**25) Posttest:** "I think he feels left out." (P1)

**Interview:** "I think he is trying to join, but no one, uhm, talks to him, or no one responds, and he feels alone." (P1)


**26) Posttest**: "He is jealous of the other boys who play on the soccer field." (P16)

**Interview**: "Hector is probably thinking about why the black people do not have the same rights as the white, and he is probably thinking about...he wants to join, but they never ask." (P16)


**27) Posttest**: "Hector is thinking that it is sad that no one cares when he asks if he can join." (P2)

**Interview**: "Uhm, I think he is thinking that he really wants to play with the others, and because he does not have anyone else to play with, he thinks...he is sad, and then there was the thing that those with dark skin could not join in and stuff." (P2)

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*Question 3: What is Chris thinking in this picture?*

12 participants gave corresponding answers to question 3, 2 sets did not correspond, 1 partially corresponded and 6 did not answer the question. Only one was seen to show greater decentering ability in the interview than on the test. On a collective basis, the average score was 5.9 out of 9, meaning an increase of 0.8 compared to the pretest. On both the posttest and in the interview, there is a divide between those who say Chris thinks about football-related things, and those who relate his thoughts to Hector or/and his skin colour. Most answers were indeed worthy scores on the simultaneous level. In fact, only two participants received scores on the sequential level, but there was still a spread between the lowest and the highest scores on the simultaneous level, with scores spread from 5 to 9:

  The first two examples below were both awarded a score of 5, whereas the final two examples were given the highest score of 9. Example 28 and 29 do imagine specifically what

Chris might think or feel, and are able to look at the presented situation from his vantage point, but, unlike example 30 and 31, they do not show an ability to take into consideration other factors that might influence his thoughts.

More than half of the interview answers showed significant correspondence with the answers to the posttest, even though this interview took place a week later. This means that there is strong support for the reliability of the posttest answers, and also suggests that the decentering ability of the participants and their opinions were conscious answers. However, a surprising amount did not wish to answer during the interview, or gave incomplete answers that were too difficult to compare, and were labelled blank (B).

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**Examples:**

**28) Pretest**: "That he has the ball and is going to shoot it into the net." (P5)

**Interview**: "That he is going to dibble that other guy and shoot a goal...uhm, a bicycle kick, right into the corner". (P5)

**29) Pretest**: "He is thinking he has to be done with the football game and win." (P16)

**Interview**: "He is just thinking about winning." (P16)

**30) Pretest**: "I think maybe he thinks it is stupid that everyone can not join in and play, and I think his parents tell him that he can not be with those who have black skin." (P11)

**Interview**: "Uhm, he might be a little...that he actually wants to play with Hector, but that he is not allowed, because they say that he can not be with those who have dark skin." (P11)

**31) Pretest**: "Chris is thinking that he does not have to care about what Hector feels because of apartheid." (P8)

**Interview**: "He is thinking: "Oh, I have more rights than Hector does", so he does not have to care, he can just brag about how he has a proper field to play on...football jersey and everything, a real goal, and he can just play and make the others jealous." (P8)

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*Question 4: Why do you think they act the way they do?*

On the final question, 13 sets of answers corresponded. None of the sets mismatched and none partially corresponded, but 8 did not respond at all on this question. Out of the 13 that did correspond, 7 showed greater decentering ability during the interview. This means that their answers did correspond, and additional information was also included during the

interview that would have increased their score. The average score on the posttest was 6.2 out of 9, meaning an increase of 2.3 from the pretest. This is well above sequential level, indicating a general score increase, and it is the question with the most increase. Three participants received scores on the sequential level, and seven received the highest scores of 8 or 9. The most frequent score awarded was 7, given to eight participants. The posttest answers showed that most participants were able to take the apartheid context into considerations and try to understand why Chris and the other boys act the way they do, shown below in examples 32, 33 and 34.

On this question, it is easier to highlight the exceptions that did *not* manage to earn high scores, meaning the participants whose answers did not satisfy the credentials necessary to earn high scores between 7 and 9. Examples 35 and 36 show that the ability to decenter can vary, and that the teaching tool, although successful with the majority, does not ensure understanding from every participant. Apart from participant 4, who answered blank on question four on the posttest, example 35 and 36 received some of the lower grades. In example 35, P15 received a 5 on her posttest answer, as it was too vague to understand exactly what she meant. We see from her interview answer that she seems to have the apartheid context in mind, but the test answers were viewed literally and not interpreted, and could therefore not be awarded a higher grade. P17, in example 36, on the other hand, has either not taken the task seriously, or does not have the necessary decentering ability to receive a score on the simultaneous level. He also did not answer a single question during the posttest interview, even when asked directly to do so, and therefore would not support or challenge the results that show an average score of 3.25 on the posttest, well within the lower, sequential level.

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**Examples:**

**32) Posttest**: "Because it was apartheid and they should do that." (P14)

**Interview**: "Because during apartheid, the black, the black skinned, were thought of as stupid and that they were worth nothing, so they were treated like that. It is the parents that, like, teach them." (P14)

**33) Posttest**: "Just because of apartheid, and because those with white skin had more rights than the black people." (P8)

**Interview**: "Because it was, uhm, apartheid, and they had a lot more rights. But he kind of wanted to, but it was, like, other people around him had yelled and said no to that maybe, and then he did not dare to let that boy in to

play with them, because he was scared of getting yelled at and stuff. But if not, he would actually had done it."
(P8)

**34) Posttest**: "Because during this time, white were worth more than black people." (P19)
**Interview**: "Because before, they thought that white people had more worth than those who came from...those who were black." (P19)

**35) Posttest**: "Because they have not learned another way to be." (P15)
**Interview**: "Because they have not learned another way to be towards each other, and they think that it is completely okay, because that is what they have learned from family and friends." (P15)

**36) Posttest**: "Because they think they are cool." (P17)
**Interview**: *(Researcher asks what the participant thinks.)* "I do not know." (P17)

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## Importance of interviews and tests

The pre- and posttests alone show that there was a significant increase in decentering scores after the intervention. In addition to this, the interviews generally support the reliability of these statistics, as more than half of the answers corresponded for each question. In addition, on the *pretest*, there were examples of participants who showed a greater ability to decenter during the interviews than on the test, while only one showed less. The overall collective mean would therefore have been higher if the interview answers were to be scored. This could indicate that the difference between the two tests should be smaller, had it not been for the fact that the posttest interview showed the same pattern. There was a significant increase in scores on the posttest, and, in addition, the interviews suggested that the decentering scores of the participants would be higher than the posttest if the answers had been scored. Also, more participants received a *corresponding+ (C+)* on the posttest than on the pretest. This meant that not only did the answers correspond, but the participants were also showing greater decentering skills during the posttest interviews than on the test. Therefore, even though the decentering skills seemed to be higher before the intervention than what was reported from the pretest, the decentering skills seemed to be even higher *after* the intervention and posttest, indicating that the significant increase in decentering skills was sufficiently supported by the interviews.

An important category when comparing was still the one awarded to those who did not answer, or gave incomplete answers that could not count, during the interviews *(B)*. This

amount increased from the pretest to the posttest interviews, with a staggering 8 participants not giving an answer to the final question alone. The reason for this is unclear, as it could be due to different reasons, e.g. insecurity, laziness or that their answer had already been mentioned, and they saw no need to repeat it. It still leaves a gap in the comparison of the participants' test and interview answers, and is difficult to interpret as either positive or negative.

At this point, it also becomes clearer why the choice was made not to teach about apartheid beforehand. The information the participants possess was not taught explicitly by the researcher, but had been acquired through interaction with the picturebook and its narrative. It shows a clear acquisition of both knowledge and decentering skills, both through working with fiction. Explicit teaching might have influenced their knowledge and answers, which is why it is all the more interesting that this many of the participants have taken their newfound information and processed it themselves to increase their ability to decenter.

## 4.3 Part two: What is the nature of the participants' responses?

The field notes were used to attempt to explain how the participants experienced the teaching situation they were in, and how the topic in question affected them. This provided the opportunity to explain a second layer to this way of working, one that regarded verbal reactions and relative factors, e.g. emotions, that do not necessarily have anything to do with knowledge. It was from the very beginning a presumption that apartheid could be a sensitive topic, and that it could be challenging for the participants to engage with the apartheid way of thinking. The project produced many different emotional reactions from the participants, from which categories were constructed by the researcher. Each activity that was performed during the intervention is explained separately, and the participants' responses are elaborated upon under the appropriate exercise.

**Activity 1: Writing a comic strip**

**Excitement.**   The first activity involved writing a comic strip, in which the participants were asked to tell the story of *The Soccer Fence* the way it would be seen from the eyes of Hector's parents. The vast majority of participants expressed initial excitement about working with literature this way. Several expressed joy about getting to draw and author a new perspective on the familiar story, all on their own. A few set about telling the exact same story as the picturebook tells, but in the shoes of Hector's mother. She would get up, make tea and a

simple breakfast before she and her children took the bus to work. Those who took to the task easily explained thoroughly how sad she felt that Hector did not get to play on the good field with the other boys, and how she wished for better days. However, to many of the participants this proved to be a challenging task.

**Misunderstanding/discouragement.** Those who misunderstood the task set about writing a brand new story. The characters were the same, and it was explained through Hector's mother or father's eyes, but the plot was completely different. When explained the original thought of the assignment, all except one of these was discouraged at having to start over, and wanted to continue with their own story. What became evident when observing the class attempt to engage in the same storyline from the perspective of some one else, was that it was harder to look at the story when they were not asked a specific question to answer.

**Confusion/struggle.** Struggle with how to start the comic or what to include was a trend with many of the participants. Formulating the story on their own was difficult without a guide standing by them and asking them question such as: "What does she see when she looks out the window at her job?" or "What does she think when she sees that Hector does not get to play with the other boys?" Those who did finish got to present their comics to the rest of the class, and a sigh of understanding came from many of those who had not been able to do it on their own.

**Table 7** Notes from the plenary discussion

|  | What does/do Chris/the parents think about Hector? | How does/do Chris/the parents feel about apartheid? | How do you think Chris/the parents are as a person/people? |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Chris** | - Dangerous to play with<br>- Different<br>- Will not involve him because they are afraid of getting yelled at<br>- Ugly<br>- Afraid that he will be better than them | - That others are different<br>- Terrible, because they become friends at the end<br>- Bad, because black people might also be nice | - Kind, but has been told that white people are worth more<br>- Good at soccer<br>- Evil, because Hector is not allowed to join hem<br>- Outside: Tough on black people.<br>Inside: does not like apartheid |
| **The parents** | - Pity him<br>- Think it is a shame that he can not play because of his skin colour<br>- He is good at soccer | - Hate it<br>- Think it is discriminating | - Concerned with Nelson Mandela being liberated and equalization<br>- Worried about their children |

**Activity 2: Plenary discussion**

The plenary discussion revolved around the three questions mentioned in the previous chapter: *(A) What does Chris/the parents think about Hector? (B) How does/do Chris/the parents feel about apartheid? (C) How do you think Chris/the parents are as a person/people?* The answers to the plenary discussion that followed were jotted down into cues on the whiteboard, based on the participants' peer discussion, shown in table 7.

**Involvement**. Almost every participant participated by contributing with his or her opinions out loud in the discussion. As the participants talked in pairs, the conversation was flowing in every corner of the classroom. The conversation quickly became mostly about Chris and what he thought and felt, and he was clearly a topic of fascination for many of them. One girl said to her partner: "I am fascinated by Chris…we do not know what he is thinking, but for some reason I think he is actually nice. But he has been told not to be nice to the white people…maybe by his parents?" (P22). Reactions such as this came from many, where they start to think of him as a person more than just a character in a story. It shows true involvement in the story.

　　**Sense of accomplishment.**　One participant (P2) expressed a sense of accomplishment when saying that it was much more interesting to work with a topic and have such a discussion when there was no right or wrong answer. This helped her participate without being afraid of getting the question wrong. This could seem to be the case for more than one participant, which was justified by the fact that several participants contributed in this discussion that rarely said anything in talks such as this.

　　**Empathy.**　Their answers so far showed that when working together, they were able to see different sides to this situation. The immediate assumption of most participants was that Chris was actually a nice boy, who had been told by people around him not to socialize with black people. When they were asked the question: "What if Chris is not nice? What if he actually thinks that black people are worth less than he is?", the room fell silent. Their empathy gradually became more emotional in nature when thinking about this question. It became clear that they only identified with the protagonist, and, in light of how the book ends (the boys becoming friends), they thought that he was in fact a nice boy at heart. Their empathy towards Hector became even stronger, and condemnation of apartheid mentality grew.

　　**Condemnation.**　When thinking about the norms in their own world, and trying to understand the situation from an "evil angle" (as P13 put it), the group collectively

condemned the racist actions. Such thoughts were labelled as "crazy" and "evil" and had no room in the world as they saw it. This started a more heated debate in the class. Participant 13 stated that: "He is just doing it the way his parents…or his society thinks he should. How can I know that I would do it differently from him if it was like that here?" This utterance did not sit well with some of the other participants, who refused to blame the South African society for this behaviour, and insisted that people willingly choose their actions.

### Activity 3: Writing a short text

During the final task of the intervention, participants were asked to write a new short text, telling the story seen from Chris' perspective. They wrote on laptops. Those who wished to, read it out loud for the rest of the class themselves, or the teacher/researcher read it for them.

**Creativity.**　The overwhelming general response during this activity was creativity. In particular, mentioning that they could have their text read aloud to the whole class spiked their motivation. Unlike during the comic strip activity, which identified a struggle to combine text and images on their own, this task was no challenge for the majority of participants. The level of independence was very high, and help was needed mostly regarding syntax and translation of words to English. Length naturally varied, but every participant produced a text seen from Chris' perspective. Most participants wrote about how Chris actually wanted to be friends with Hector, but that he was afraid of what his parents and friends would think. In most cases, they became friends in the end.

　　**Rejection.**　One case stood out during this assignment. Whereas most participants wrote about Chris actually being good, one participant (P5) thought it was too difficult to try to understand the racist way that many white people did during apartheid. He thought the task of trying to write about the black boy the way they were viewed during apartheid was too horrible, and decided he did not want to participate. He would not relate to that mentality. This boy participated eagerly in the plenary discussion and submitted pre- and posttest that received generally high scores. However, during this assignment, he rejected the task, saying that he did not see the point of understanding the racist point of view. This participant expressed his thoughts very loudly and was, after debate, allowed to sit and read instead, in order not to disturb the work of the other participants.

　　**Identification.**　When reading the stories and discussing the activity, two participants pointed out that it was more fun to work with writing and talking English this way than to memorize glossaries and factual texts. The class generally agreed with participant 13, who

said that it was easier to understand a story when it was about someone his own age and liked the same things that they did, i.e. soccer. When one girl was given a compliment on her story after reading it out loud, she stated with pride: "Like, it is kind of cool…even though the culture is different, kids are very often alike" (P16).

# 5. Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

In the following chapter, theory and findings will be discussed to shed some light on the thesis question and the formulated research questions. The main findings of the study, regarding both the first and second research questions, are discussed, followed by a discussion of the four test questions and the use of decentering and literary fiction in the classroom. Lastly, possibilities, limitations and consequences of the teaching tool are discussed.

## 5.2 Findings

### 5.2.1 Main findings

The main findings of this study show that there was a significant increase in decentering scores from the pretest, with a mean score of 17.81, to the posttest, which yielded a mean score of 24.19 for all four questions. The probability value was $< 0.01$, considered by conventional criteria to be highly significant. In addition, the interviews showed full or partial correspondence with over 50% of the answers when compared to the pretest and posttest, which strongly supported the reliability of these results. They even indicated that the participant group possessed even greater decentering skills, had the interviews been scored in the same way as the tests were. The ability to decenter was traceable even before the intervention, and was enhanced in the course of the three weeks. In the following sub-chapter, chapter 5.2.3, the different aspects of these results are discussed and analysed, based on theory presented in chapter two of Byram (2008), Fincher (2012) and Burkman (2008).

### 5.2.2 Other findings

The field notes provided results indicating that the participants had a dynamic approach to the teaching tool. It brought out strong emotional reactions, both those of joy and provocation/struggle, and the method clearly challenged them. The plenary discussion proved to be especially important in developing decentering, both through talking in pairs first, and then discussing the questions collectively with the rest of the class. The interaction that took place during that second exercise seemed to be where many were able to question, reflect upon and be enlightened about what the characters thought and felt in the book.

In addition, the four questions showed interesting results, as they yielded very different levels of increase when compared to each other. Questions 1 and 4 showed an

increase of 2.1 and 2.3 from the pretest, respectively, whereas question 2 and 3 showed an increase of 1.3 and 0.8 from the pretest. Although question 2 and 3 showed higher scores than 1 and 4 after the pretest, their increase was noticeably smaller after the intervention period.

## 5.3 Discussion of main findings

There is definitive evidence that can be traced both through the tests and the interviews that show a clear grasp of decentering by the majority of the participants. When asked why they think the characters act the way they do in the picture, a large amount of the participants managed to see the situation from both Chris and Hector's points of view, taking the apartheid context into consideration when they explained their actions, especially during the interviews. An example of this is the participant who explained: "Because maybe, when they grew up, their parents and others told them that the people who had black skin, they are not good people. So therefore they have kind of been taught not to care about them, and just...yeah, ignore them" (P9). Another example is the participant who formulated a similar answer when she said that it was "because they had not learnt another way to be towards each other, and therefore they think that it is completely fine, because that is what they have learnt from family and friends" (P15). The explanations of the situation seen from Chris' perspective, such as these examples, are of special interest, simply because his thoughts and feelings are not explained at all in the book. What Chris thinks and why he acts the way he does are explained based on their understanding of the context and narrative, not from remembering the text in the book.

One statement during the plenary discussion exemplified a pride example of how important teaching decentering can be. When the class was asked their opinions on the possibility that Chris actually thought black people were worth less, a heated discussion sparked. However, participant 13 provided an especially interesting answer: "He is just doing it the way his parents...or his society thinks he should. How can I know that I would do it differently from him if it was like that here?" His question sits at the core of decentering, as he has emerged himself so thoroughly into the situation of the character that he actually imagines *himself* in Chris' situation, and tries to transfer the situation into his own reality to understand his actions. If there was initial doubt that young children were able to suspend their own perspective in favour of someone else's - to imagine what other people, or fictional characters, were thinking or feeling - this study shows clear evidence of the opposite.

The results show that in the present study, the spread in decentering abilities was large, and the scores varied greatly. For example, whereas participants 8 and 11 increased in mean decentering scores from 5.25 to 8.75, and from 5.25 to 8.25, respectively, there were

individuals who either stagnated or decreased in scores. Participant 17 received a posttest mean of 3.25, a 0.25 decrease from his mean score of 3.5 on the pretest. This exemplifies how there, in any group, will be differences in achievement, and the reasons for this can be many. However, the main pattern is that of general increase.

### Decentering and Byram's savoirs

The main findings, the pretest, posttest and interviews, show an increasing level of decentering among the participants. The ability to decenter is traditionally labelled an aspect of Byram's *savoir être* and revolves around attitudes and the aspect of openness (Byram, 2008, p. 69). However, several aspects of the other savoirs, presented in chapter 2, can be traced in the development of decentering in this study. The first of them, simply called *savoirs* (p. 14), refers to knowledge of the target culture. When working with understanding how the different characters in the story think and act, knowledge of the surrounding context of apartheid became important. If the participants did not have an understanding of the rules during apartheid, the historical context of the story, they would not have been able to understand why the boys acted the way they did, or what they thought of each other. Explaining what was happening in the picture (question 1), would also have remained highly descriptive if they had not had an understanding of the surrounding circumstances that affected their actions. In addition to knowledge, the participants' ability to interpret the situation in light of their own culture was necessary, labelled by Byram as the *savoir comprendre* (p. 14). Their ability to understand and interpret the book became noticeable as they answered the test questions about the perspectives in the book. Doing this required an understanding of what they considered the norm in a society, and how the apartheid mentality collided with this. The participants' answers to the tests and during the interview also showed an increasing ability to be aware of the importance of critical cultural awareness, named savoir engager (Wiest, 2010, p. 2). An example of this is the mentioned statement of participant 13, who was able to see both his own and the South African culture from a metaperspective, and questioned how he would have acted if he had been influenced by the same generalizations and stereotypes that governed during apartheid. The final aspect is *savoir apprendre*, also traceable in the participants' test answers. They used their newfound knowledge in communicating their understanding of a foreign culture to someone else other than themselves. They put what they had learned into words, interpreting and explaining their opinions of the situation.

From this analysis of results and theory, we see how decentering is located within

aspects of each savoir. The ability to change perspectives seems to require both knowledge, ability to understand and interpret, ability to see one's own culture from a different perspective as well as the ability to question generalizations and to use the newfound information in interaction, such as the activities conducted during the intervention.

**The Piagetian age limit**

The significant results of increase in decentering skills presented above, show that decentering is a learnable skill, also in primary school. The study was driven by results from Leeper, Dobbs and Jenkins that suggested that future research should investigate the decentering development in relation to Piagetian cognitive development (2007, p. 155). The term decentering originated with Piaget, who claimed that it contained the ability to balance multiple perspectives simultaneously (Fincher, 2012, p. 1). Piaget early stated that the ability to decenter first was found in cognitive development after the age of 12, as this was the stage where the child develops understanding of perspectives, measurements and causality (Fincher, 2012). According to Piaget, children below the age of 12 only had a spatial perspective-taking ability, and claimed that older children were more skilled at this (Burkman, 2008, p. 5).

According to Piaget, decentering requires logic and reasoning, which is mainly developed in the preadolescent period (12-15 years). Some of the most important results of this study are those that challenge this claim. Not only did the participants from the very beginning show a sequential ability to decenter, even before the intervention, but this increased significantly after working systematically with activities that challenged their decentering skills. The majority of the participant group received decentering scores at the simultaneous level post intervention, suggesting that, not only do they possess the ability to decenter below the Piagetian age limit, placing decentering in the concrete operational age and not the formal, but many were also at one of the highest levels, based on Feffer's scoring scheme (Fincher, 2012, p. 2). Admittedly, some participants in the current study were only able to take one perspective at a time, but the study also shows many participants' ability to overcome this, despite their young age. Piaget claimed that children below the preadolescent age were not able to suspend their egocentric thoughts in favour of entering an alternate mindset, but the results from this study suggest that this is not necessarily a general rule. Although some participants struggled more than others with decentering, the general average of the group showed clear decentering tendencies. Thus, the results stand to question the decentering age limit. A potential reason why there might be a disagreement about the age where decentering is developed, could be that cognitive development is highly individualized,

and difficult to generalize (Burkman, 2008).

### 5.3.1 Differences in results between the four test questions

Sub-question 1a under research question 1, asked for nuances regarding whether the four test questions generated different results. Interestingly, an analysis of the pretest and posttest shows that the different questions produced different levels of increase, making it relevant to discuss what might have influenced the scores of the participants. The following sub-chapter will discuss the possible reasons why their increase differ, and why two questions in particular generated higher decentering skills than the other.

**Table 8**  Mean scores and increase per question from the pretest to the posttest

|  | Pretest | Posttest | Increase |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Question 1** | 3.9 | 6 | 2.1 |
| **Question 2** | 4.7 | 6 | 1.3 |
| **Question 3** | 5.1 | 5.9 | 0.8 |
| **Question 4** | 3.9 | 6.2 | 2.3 |

In table 8, we see the mean scores per question and their increase from the pretest to the posttest. These results were also reported in chapter 4. We see the general pattern that there was an increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest, but we also see from the fourth column that this increase varied in extent. Question 2 and 3 received a 1.3 and 0.8 increase, whereas questions 1 and 4 received 2.1 and 2.3, respectively. The first and final question show close to a double score increase compared to 2 and 3, making it interesting to discuss the possible reasons for these results.

Questions, in their simplest form, can be either open or closed. All four of the questions used begin with classic question words, and also request more elaborate answers than yes and no, and can therefore be labelled open questions. The response is left to the participant, and the answers are not "forced-choice", as explained by King, referring to questions that give the respondent no choice in his or her response (1972, p. 157). There are, however, differences in what types of information they seek, and therefore what they demand from the participant.

**What is happening in this picture?**

The first question requests, at first glance, a descriptive answer. On the pretest, many participants appeared to be interpreting this question as, expressed in an alternate way: "What do you *see* in this picture?" Many provided descriptive answers of what they visually observed, which is reflected in the mean score of 3.9, meaning the majority received scores on the sequential level. However, after working with the situations in the book through different lenses and angles, the importance of the context and how it influences the characters became more natural to include, which was reflected in their posttest answers. It appeared that, when answering the posttest, more participants did not only describe what they saw in the picture, but explained the circumstances that influence the situation and the people in it. One can also suggest, based on their answers, that fewer participants read the first question as "What do you see?", but rather as: "What is the situation in this picture?" Fewer participants gave answers such as those exemplified on page 54, e.g. "Hector lifts up his hands with that black boy" (P21) , but showed a higher decentering level with answers such as: "Hector is maybe sad because he can not join them and play. He is probably tired of not getting to play with the other boys" (P9). The answer that received highest decentering score out of the group was: "In this picture Hector is shut out by the other boys on the field. He is shut out because he has a black skin" (P13). It is evident in this answer that he is not interpreting the formulated question literally, namely describing what he sees in the picture, but explains the surrounding context of the situation he is looking at. Therefore, a possible reason why this question increased with 2.1 from the pretest to the posttest could arguably be that many of the participants realized this exact point; that explaining what is happening involves more than just looking at the picture. It means taking into consideration several factors in the situation and balancing several sources of information, both what they have read in the text and learned about the societal context, as well as interpreting what they see.

**What is Hector/Chris thinking in this picture?**

The second and third test question generated mean scores around the border between the sequential and simultaneous level. On the pretest, results showed that the participants received higher scores on these questions than on question 1 and 4, but also that the increase from the pretest to the posttest was vastly smaller. Contrary to question 1, and, as we will see, question 4, these two questions were not subjects of interpretation in the same way. The question word used, "what", asks for something specific, often an object, in this case an object of thought. It refers to a piece of particular information, and signals that the person asking wants something

specific, an object, idea or action. It also does not demand an exploratory answer such as question 4 does, but still requires taking into consideration what the participants remember from the story. Therefore, it is questionable whether this formulation let the participants show how much they knew and were able to explain, when the answers had to be very specific to be awarded high scores.

Reaching the highest scores can be viewed as more difficult on this question, simply because the researcher was looking for more particular content than on the other questions. As stated in chapter 4 (p.57), suggesting that the boys' thoughts were solely about soccer would not earn them the highest score, because the storyline is about apartheid and how the racial divide slowly crumbles and allows the boys to be friends. Results showed that there was, in fact, a divide between the participants who were able to refer the thoughts of Hector and Chris to the circumstances of apartheid, and those who focused on the theme of soccer. One of the reasons why fewer participants gained higher scores on these questions, was that they did not necessarily provide answers that seemed realistic to the story. They were able to suggest what Chris and Hector were thinking, but many of the answers were not seen to have root in the plot of the study, being as apartheid was the important context to take into consideration. These examples were e.g. "He is enjoying the game and sees a white boy lifting his fist and Hector does the same" (P9), or "I think he is feeling shut out" (P1). These examples explain what happens and, to some extent, what they are thinking, but they do not necessarily explain exactly what the boys are thinking, and, most importantly, they do not explain *why*, e.g. "I think he is feeling shut out [because of his skin colour]". These answers are clearly at a lower level compared to answers such as: "He is probably thinking that if he could join, it would be fun, and that they do not listen to him because he has a different skin colour" (P13). However, such precise and explanatory answers were rare. This suggested that, although most of the participants were able to express the thoughts of the characters, the specific expectations that were required to earn high scores, caused the increase to be sufficiently smaller than on the two other questions.

**Why do you think they act the way they do?**

Compared to question 2 and 3, the final question is a clearly more open, and the least descriptive, question. The initial question word, *why*, calls for explanatory answers, dependent on the ability of the participants to argue and explain. The question appeals to their creative side, and requires an ability to understand and interpret the situation they behold. Before the intervention, the participants had not worked together on discussing and reflecting about the characters' different angles, and they had not thought that much about how apartheid might

influence their thoughts and actions. Their level of context information had remained more or less the same, as they did not receive additional teaching on apartheid in the meantime. However, they were challenged to put their thoughts into words, and explain how they interpreted the situation, which is, more or less, what question 4 also asks them to do. Interestingly, not only did question four generate the largest increase out of the four, but it is also the question that, in one way, most strongly indicates the decentering level of the participants. To some extent, a participant could find an answer to question 1, 2 and 3 by merely looking at the picture, even though this would indicate a low decentering score. If they only looked at the picture, the apartheid context would be lost. However, on question 4, the participants could not find the answer empirically. The question requires analysing the different sources of information they had received, both text and image. Some showed a stronger ability to do this, and to some it was difficult. We still see that, through working with different perspectives, the interaction between the participants broadened their understanding of the situation, a change most clearly displayed through the large increase in scores to question 4.

## 5.4 Discussion of field notes findings

### 5.4.1 A teachable topic?

The field notes support that decentering is a learnable skill indeed, as exemplified above. The examination of the findings show that, as Hoff claims, the individual participants go through different stages of incomprehension, provocation and reflection before broadening their understanding (2013, p. 37). This is also strongly linked to Byram's *savoirs* (Byram, 2008, p. 69). The savoirs complete each other, agreeing together that being intercultural is an activity, as one goes back and forth between the similarities and differences in the target culture as opposed to one's own. It contains the ability to interpret (*savoir comprendre*), reflect, learn (*savoirs*), interact (*savoir apprendre*), be critical (*savoir engager*) and also showing openness (*savoir être*), all of which can be traced in the reactions of the participants presented in chapter 4 (Byram, 2008, p. 69).

As described previously, some participants showed unwillingness to overcome their familiar values and beliefs (e.g. participant 5) (p.68). As Forsman emphasises, quoted by Hoff, overcoming such resistance is necessary to develop intercultural competence, and the diversity in emotional reactions to the activity highlights the necessity of the topic (2013, p. 38). The reactions explained in chapter 4.3 (p.65) also shed some light on decentering as a

teachable topic. Language learning can go hand in hand with culture teaching as long as it is done in a learner appropriate manner, and with the guidance of a competent teacher (Byram, 2008, p. 82). The goal was to create a literary context in which the participants would explore the narrative from different perspectives. The process proved to be a type of experimental learning, where the participants were exposed to challenging situations, both cognitively and emotionally. According to Byram, the aspect of intercultural competence most appropriate for the primary school level is that of *savoir être*, in which we find decentering as a skill. As children still are influenced and absorb impressions that they are exposed to, they have not accepted information as absolutes just yet, he states (Byram, 2008, p. 82). This tendency shone through in some of the discussions, especially during the interviews. Some were clearly influenced by what the participants around them argued, whereas others had more independent opinions. Although the participants who had answered before him had claimed that Chris actually wanted to play with Hector, but thought that he was not allowed, one participant answered the following in the interview: "I think he really does not care and he just continues to play with the others" (P1). This was different from the answers of the other participants, who questioned his argument. "Yes, he cares. He has stood there many times" (P8). "Yeah, but maybe right here he does not want to. Or maybe he does. Yeah, maybe" (P1). "I think he does" (P11). This example shows how much influence the input of the other participants has on P1, and how he changes his initial attitude to the collective one. His initial statement was completely acceptable as far as decentering goes, but the questioning of the other participants made him unsure of the correctness of his answer, and he seems to decide to change it.

### 5.4.2 A dynamic approach to decentering

When dealing with such a topic, it becomes necessary to discuss the approach in which one takes the pupils out of their comfort zone and present them with an unfamiliar, and sometimes uncomfortable, topic. Decentering needs not be about a relatively difficult topic such as apartheid, but in the current study, this became a factor necessary to discuss. Extending their thoughts and trying to understand a worldview that they did not agree with was demanding for many of them, and required a democratic attitude. The topic in general demands a willingness to relativize their own values and beliefs, to adapt to an alternative scenario and mindset (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144). Suspending the natural point of view of the "Self" to develop a deeper understanding of the "Other" always relies on the willingness of the participant, something that can not be forced by the teacher.

Louie claims that multicultural literature benefits the classroom, but also that there

has been little research that explores exactly how it benefits the pupils, and how learners interact with the text (Louie, 2005, p. 566). The present study attempts to shed some light on this field, and showed how this interaction is highly *dynamic*. In line with Hoff's findings that readers are both faced with incomprehension, reflection, provocation etc. when working with fiction, the study shows how the participants went back and forth, discussing and questioning the actions and mentalities in this book (2013, pp. 37–45). Reactions were many and varied greatly in nature. The participants displayed both excitement, sense of achievement, strong emotional empathy, condemnation and rejection towards the assignment. It was clear that the topic stirred up different emotions, and some reacted more strongly than others. Some struggled with the general execution of the tasks, while others struggled with changing their mindsets. Some struggled with decentering during one activity, and excelled at another. One struggled with understanding why he should try to understand a person and a perspective that he fundamentally did not agree with, and refused to try to see the situation from the "evil" character's point of view. Others gained a metaperspective on their own worldviews, and questioned their own actions, had they been in the same shoes. The diversity in reactions will by many be seen as positive, and being able to discuss, reflect, disagree etc., both together and individually, is a great foundation for learning and growth. Being exposed to unfamiliar situations is necessary to develop new understanding. Rejection of the task, like P5 did, is not necessarily an indication of a failed assignment, but an indication of potential in decentering and intercultural competence. Open-mindedness is essential to developing intercultural competence and an important part of intercultural education, thereby being an important aspect of teaching and learning (Wandel, 2002, p. 78).

Byram stated that to develop intercultural competence, one needs to go back and forth between the terms identity, culture, intercultural encounters and competence (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 13). Questioning one's own actions and attitudes the way participant 13 did, and being able to see how one's culture could change due to societal and political circumstances, is an important task of intercultural competence. The dynamic process of going back and forth between what is familiar and what is unknown was seen, by many, as an enriching activity that broadened their understanding of the South African culture. This was exemplified by statements such as: "Like, it is kind of cool...even though the culture is different, kids are very often alike" (P16).

From the incidents we have seen exemplified above, the importance of interaction in development of decentering became apparent. This, in relation to sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000) and the role of the teacher in intercultural competence (Hoff, 2013), will be

### 5.4.3 Decentering as a sociocultural process

Being intercultural is an activity, and is in this case dependent on the interpretation and understanding of a text. This is anchored in Vogotsky's sociocultural theory of interaction as a prerequisite for learning (Lantolf et al., 2014, p. 207). As the Philipino example in chapter 2 illustrated (p. 17), an important task is to act as a mediator between the two cultures, e.g. the target culture and one's own (Byram, 2008, p. 68). The teacher is thereby the support needed for the participants to reach beyond their individual limits, i.e. their Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). The role of the teacher became vital throughout the intervention process, as the different activities had to be carefully planned. The participants are to get in touch with their emotional responses in such a situation, and the teacher is vital to establishing a beneficial dialogue, and building confidence about reflection. Hoff found that when working with foreign language fiction, even at upper secondary level, the role of the teacher in helping the learners in discovering their full potential is pivotal (2013, p. 46). This task became just as evident, if not more, at the primary school level, and helping the participants see how much they are capable of understanding lay very much in the hands of the researcher. A mediating role became especially important during the plenary discussion, as the class were to talk about difficult questions together and exchange opinions. Encouraging their emotional responses to the text and inviting them to approach the text from different angles, in addition to thorough planning and structuring of the discussion, were necessary to gain a fruitful discussion.

Just as cultures are constructed in the co-existence of people the development of decentering appeared to be at its most beneficial during interaction between the participants, making the other participants important peers in scaffolding the learning process (Portera & Grant, 2011, p. 273). The way this teaching tool was designed, interaction was a natural part of the activities. This choice was initially made due to space constraints and resources, simply because during most of the lessons, the class was only assigned one teacher. However, the situation made it more obvious to the researcher that the participants both taught each other and learned from each other. There was a general positive attitude towards the activities, which created a safe and open atmosphere for discussion. The previous studies on decentering, exemplified in the introduction chapter, have focused on individual development, and comparing ages, biological relationships and methods where decentering is developed (Fincher, 2012; Burkman, 2008). Two of the activities from Feffer's original decentering

theories that were either used (writing task) or were attempted to be used (role-taking-task), both initially revolved around individual performance. The role-taking-task was cancelled due to disturbance from some of the participants, fearing that the task disturbance could jeopardise the learning outcome for the rest of the group.

In the present study, the sociocultural aspect of learning appeared to be vital for decentering development. During the intervention process, an important leap forward came during the plenary discussion. When faced with each question, the participants first discussed it in pairs, before contributing to the plenary talk. The talk showed how the participants, when discussing the text together, helped each other advance in decentering ability. The dynamic discussion process, where they questioned, argued and reflected upon the same questions, resulted in a richer understanding of the different perspectives. The use of open-ended questions made contributions less intimidating, and the participants felt it was easier to participate in the discussion when there was no right or wrong answer (P2, p. 67).

### Developing decentering through interaction

The exchange of opinions some of the participants (3,7 and 13) had during the second round of interviews, shows an example of how the interaction contributes to advancing their skills.

**Interview conversation:**
P3: "Hector is standing outside the fence and wants to play, but the boys inside the fence, for example Chris, will not let him play."
P7: "And he is sad."
P13: "Yes he is sad. And it is mostly because of the apartheid that was in those days."
P3: "Oh yeah... Chris and them have light skin and Hector does not, so they shut him out because of the soccer."
*(A few more participants answer the question before P3 summarises the talk.)*
P3: "Hector is outside the fence and wants to play, but the boys inside the fence, Chris for instance, do not let him play because he has dark skin. Done."

The instructions were for each participant to deliver their answer once, but in this case, one sees how the thoughts of his co-participants expands P3's understanding. Based on this example, one can question whether a reason why several interview answers differ from the test answers, could potentially be due to influence from other participants. It seems, from the sound recording, that P3 has an epiphany about why the boys act the way they do as he bursts out: "Oh yeah...Chris and them have light skin and Hector does not, so they shut him out because of the soccer" at the beginning of his second answer. This raises a question about the degree of influence during the interview: whether the test-questions and interview questions would have

been more similar if each participant had been interviewed individually. It also makes the case for the importance of interaction in this setting, as his following responses suggest that an understanding has been unlocked, that widens his decentering skills regarding the situation. This is not to say that the decentering skills did not exist prior to the interview, but the statements of his partner seem to unlock an understanding that he was not aware of before. His tone of voice expresses a change in understanding, as if something was revealed to him. As the interview continues and he is asked why the boys act the way they do (question 4), he answers: "Good question. Maybe because they want some difference in people, and that not everyone should be treated the same, which is a pretty stupid rule. Because now, racism is not allowed, and I think that is good." While still having his own predispositions and making his own standpoint known, he attempts to rationally understand why apartheid mentality governed.

Another example is this conversation between participants 20 and 12, that took place during an interview. Participant 20 received scores just below the simultaneous line on the pretest, but during the interview, she showed a fundamental gap in understanding of the apartheid situation. The context was explained to her by another participant, and she continued to be one of the most active participants during the intervention, and received a mean score of 7 on the posttest, well above the simultaneous line.

P20: "What is weird about this picture is that, if you were not blond, you were African or coloured, and he is not blond." (Pointing to a brown-haired, white boy)

P12: "The boy to the left? He has a pretty light skin. I think it had more to do with the skin colour. You can have blonde hair even if you have black skin too."

P20: "But only the white ones were right...?"

P12: "Skin. White skin. Not hair...or, necessarily. Wasn't it?

Participant 20 showed prior to the intervention that she had an average ability within decentering, but needed for someone to explain the basics of the context to her, and help her along the way. She was dependent on the interaction between herself and a participant or the teacher, because participant-text interaction had not enlightened her sufficiently. This shows that, just as with other educational skills taught in the classroom, decentering is, too, dependent on social interaction to be developed further. In addition, we see an example of how the other *savoirs* are necessary to interpret and understand the context, both knowledge (savoirs), interaction (savoir apprendre) and openness (savoir être) .

### 5.4.4 Using Feffer as a tool of analysis

To a large extent, Melvin Feffers Decentering Scoring system was used as a tool of analysis,

as well as his suggested activities that sought to increase decentering skills during the intervention, as exemplified through Burkman (2012) and Fincher (2008). Previous studies have shown main interest in individual performance due to the fact that cognitive development is individualized (Fincher, 2012, p. 41). The goal of this study is not to question this by generalizing the results to larger populations within the same age group, but, as discussed above, will make a case for the role of interaction within development of decentering. The results were measured individually, and the individual participant was only compared to him- or herself, but generally, these observations show that most participants were dependent on the mutual construction, discussion and reflection regarding decentering that came through social interaction.

The use of Feffer's Interpersonal Decentering as a scoring system provided an understandable, easily manageable tool for analysis of the collected data material (Feffer, 1959). It was noted, initially, that there have been limited amounts of previous research using this system, and further validation is needed in the field. However, as opposed to many of the previous studies on decentering that have been carried out, the present study might not be sufficiently extensive, and the participant group would have to be substantially larger, if it were to be used to validate the scoring system. This study was also carried out in a new field; while previous research has been carried out within social development, clinical trials and the like, this study was performed in an educational setting. In addition, the study made several adjustments to the scoring process that makes it difficult to use in comparison with other studies. Specifically, these adjustments refer to the use of pretest and posttest instead of interview-like situations, which has been used more frequently by other researchers (Burkman, 2008; Fincher, 2012). Also, the process was done in a large group and not one-on-one, as they more commonly have been. The use of stimuli was not as extensive as in clinical trials, and adaptations were made in regards to how the interaction units were analysed (Leeper et al., 2007, p. 158). However, to both the researcher and the additional master students who practiced the system, it was evaluated to be both easily used and precise in measuring, meaning it corresponded well with cognitive processing. In addition, as found by studies mentioned in Leeper et. al., the study agrees that participants struggle more with decentering when they are facing personas with personal characteristics that they do not identify with (2007, p. 154). Overcoming such struggles are central to intercultural competence, and especially to the decentering ability (Hoff, 2013, p. 38).

## 5.5 Decentering and literary fiction: a place together in the classroom?

Based on Ibsen & Wiland (2000), Krashen (2004) and Dolan (2014), the following sub-chapter will discuss the potential place for decentering and literary fiction together in the classroom.

### 5.5.1 The power of reading and decentering

Based on the results from this study, it can be argued that fictional literature should play a more significant role in the foreign language classroom. The study shows how literature can be a powerful tool for teaching because of its ability to reach the reader, no matter how young, at an emotional level. Its speaks to us, and challenges our perspectives on the world. Krashen (2004) early stated that learners that read more, knew more. He emphasised how literature can help develop cultural knowledge, and made a case for bringing more fictional literature into the classroom. The present study can in many ways be regarded as an argument for intercultural competence, especially decentering, in the foreign language classroom. We interpret literature based on our own worldviews and our frames of reference. The current project has exemplified how broadening our frames of reference can lead to greater understanding of our own actions and thoughts, as well as those of others. Through using a narrative, the results support Ibsen's claim that literature both enlightens us and can also cause strong emotional reactions with the reader (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144). In the present study, using literary fiction has exemplified how it can provide opportunities for cognitive learning, and shows how it can go hand in hand with cultural knowledge. Literature is said to "challenge our own prejudices and fixed opinions" about societies, which is clearly exemplified in this study (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 144). Working with *The Soccer Fence* challenged the participants to remove themselves, temporarily, from what they viewed to be obvious truths. The level at which this was achieved varied among the participants, but the ability of the group to change perspectives increased with almost each individual.

Education and culture go hand in hand, and fiction has the ability to engage learners at a deeper level, diving into a culture different from their own (Dolan, 2014, p. 8). Here, the story appealed to every participant in the group, and several became so immersed in the situations that they responded with strong emotional reactions. Using the picturebook as a tool for decentering allowed the teacher to convey a story to each individual, and, as observed, it affected the participants in many different ways, as described in the field notes.

The interplay between text and picture served its main purpose in this study, by

supporting understanding and being subject to interpretation. As Ibsen and Wiland emphasise, working with foreign language texts can be challenging as one struggles with the language in a different way from a native speaker (Ibsen & Wiland, 2000, p. 137). This struggle was weakened through the assistance of imagery, as well as collective readings of the book, involving translation. Working with the book together, translating each page and clearing up confusion as we went along, helped keeping the focus of each participant throughout the twists and turns of the story. Although picturebooks previously have been used mainly for development of literacy, this study has made a clear example of how versatile the picturebook can be in the foreign language classroom, especially in regards to decentering (Dolan, 2014, p. 9).

In this study, the picturebook has proven its place as a relevant source in developing decentering. The picturebook illustrated excellently the cultural situation that existed in South Africa, and helped them understand a world that is changing (Dolan, 2014, p. 17). The topic of apartheid can be difficult to teach at lower levels, but the picturebook proved useful to describe the situation from a child's angle, making it more relatable to the participants. In the book, Hector is approximately the same age as the participants, making his reality all the more different from their own, and thereby interesting to follow.

Contrary to Feffer, who used multiple different cards showing unrelated situations, this study exemplifies how decentering can be developed using a single narrative. Working with a story over a longer period of time created a stronger emotional relationship to both the culture and the characters, making it arguable that this helped the participants to decenter. Because they had a stronger connection to the story, they seemed to be more willing to enter into the perspectives of the different characters, and more willing to understand them.


## 5.6 An intercultural tool? Limitations of the present study.

Based on Byram's (2008) theory on intercultural competence and development of decentering (Burkman, 2008; Cromer, 1971; Fincher, 2012), it is necessary to discuss which of the goals of intercultural competence this study fulfils, or does not fulfil, in addition to limitations. The first area of discussion is related to generalizability and the scope of the participant group. It becomes difficult to generalize the findings of this study to a larger population, simply due to the low sample size (N=21). The project was limited in resources and time, and the researcher had to work with the choices at hand. The scope could favourably be larger and involve different ages and academic levels, but this does not mean that the results are of any less

interest to the field of decentering, and intercultural competence in general.

An interesting aspect of the participant group is also regarding ethnicity. Several nationalities were represented in the sample; half of the pupils in this class were either half Norwegian or not Norwegian at all. Although most of them had been born in Norway or lived there their entire lives, they still have close contact with several different cultures. This stands in contrast to the average ethnic Norwegian pupil, and raises a question regarding whether these participants may already have been decentered. Some of them may, arguably, have acted as mediators between the culture of their parents and the Norwegian culture, making it possible that they possess a greater ability to decenter from the start. Interestingly, the participants who received the highest scores (see figure 6, p.51), P8, P11 and P13, were either half Norwegian (P11 and P13), or not Norwegian at all (P8). However, results also show that participants 20 and 5 received scores almost at the same level, both ethnic Norwegian, and the two weakest participants (P4 and P17) were ethnic Norwegian, further questioning the theory. It is still a possibility that some of these participants had an advantage with their multicultural background.

Another topic for discussion are limitations regarding the method, i.e. formulation of the questions, potential error in scoring and the choice of pictures for the tests. As discussed previously, the formulation of the questions may have had an impact of the participants' understanding. Had the questions been formulated differently, especially questions 1, 2 and 3, as exemplified in sub-chapter 5.3, the results may also have been different. Limitations to potential errors in scoring could also occur, if the researcher had, by some misjudgement, assigned the wrong scores to an answer. This was, to the best of the researcher's ability, done in a reliable way, and checked by additional assistants. A third point regarding method limitations, are the choices of pictures used for the tests shown in appendix 3. The pictures used are from different parts of the story, and show different levels of emotions with the characters, and some may evaluate the posttest picture to be more emotionally clear than the pretest picture. The pretest photo does not display the characters' facial expressions quite as clearly, and therefore requires more interpretation.

Whether the chosen activities performed during the intervention were the best choices to develop decentering is also a question for discussion. The tasks were chosen with care and conveyed at the best of the researcher's power, but there is the possibility that different activities would have been better suited. However, for the current project, these were the tasks seen as most appropriate in regards to the participant group and their circumstances.

Despite limitations both in regards to scope and method of this teaching tool, given the resources at hand, the results of the current study can, indeed, be considered reliable.

# 6. Final commentary

During the three-week period, a literary context had been created, in which the participants were to interpret and take positions on situations different from the ones they were used to. The decentering ability was not forced upon them, but a context was introduced that would help them take the characters' positions, and make them reflect on the thoughts, values and norms of the different characters. The participants questioned the context and perspectives continuously as they tried to understand the mentalities that governed during apartheid. To the majority of the participant, this process bore fruit, and increased their ability to decenter significantly. It was noticeable that most participants developed their ability to interpret a situation based on the context in which it happens, to imagine the thoughts and feelings of fictional characters, even though they might have collided with their own opinions. It was apparent that the participants came with their own predispositions, but to a large degree were able to temporarily show openness to alternative ways of thinking, and reflect on how the society they live in affect their own thoughts and values.

The degree of adjustment varied, as some accepted and some rejected the different tasks put before them. Some were willing to experience the feelings of pro-apartheid characters, while some rejected them and struggled with imagining how these characters thought and felt. An important finding is the role of interaction on decentering, and how the willingness of the participants to decenter was strengthened by their mutual interactions, both in pairs and as a class. One can arguably say that the participants developed decentering together, through interaction and communication. Such examples of research show that cognitive development is highly individualized, and can be difficult to generalize, even though typical patterns are traceable. Although there were cases of participants who did not benefit from the process, the main findings present a piece of research that could be interesting to the development of intercultural competence in the foreign language classroom. It has worked as a gateway to developing intercultural competence, by focusing on a different culture with attitudes unfamiliar to the participants.

## 6.1 Thoughts about future research on the field

The study has discussed the topic of decentering in the classroom, and the possibilities for future research are vast. This research has presented several new and interesting angles from which one can approach decentering, areas that were not included in the following study. An

interesting angle would be to look at how this teaching tool would be received at a higher level, or how it has impacted the participants' thoughts after ended research. It is also not assured that this study would have had the same results with a different researcher or teacher, or if one had used a different book, a different literary genre or in a different subject than English.

The possibilities are vast, and the present study can argue that the field of decentering should not be put to rest. It is an interesting aspect, as one sees how decentering as a competence contains elements from each of the different *savoirs*. Developing decentering has proved to, not only develop perspective-taking, but also critical cultural awareness, understanding, knowledge etc. It would also be interesting to research decentering development over a longer period of time, and focus on the learners' thoughts on intercultural competence. Do they see it as an asset, and do they understand the relevance of the topic? The present study has also challenged the claim that decentering is fist developed in the preadolescent age, making it an interesting thought to research exactly at what age one can first trace decentering, and how it develops over time. When could one say that one is fully decentered? What factors might stagnate the development of this skill, or what might challenge it? The field of decentering has great potential, and the power of the "we" – developing competence *together* in the classroom, can help bring intercultural competence to focus in education. This study was a small step in the direction of developing decentering, but it showed interesting results that could arguably contribute to the important field of intercultural competence.

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## 10.1 Approved NSD form (Appendix 1)

**Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Anna Birketveit
Senter for utdanningsforskning Høgskolen i Bergen
Postboks 7030
5020 BERGEN

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Vår dato: 02.11.2015          Vår ref: 44801 / 3 / LB          Deres dato:          Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 21.09.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

| | |
|---|---|
| 44801 | Developing intercultural competence through literary fiction in a Norwegian L2 classroom |
| Behandlingsansvarlig | Høgskolen i Bergen, ved institusjonens øverste leder |
| Daglig ansvarlig | Anna Birketveit |
| Student | Lydia Kristin Furnes |

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.05.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Lene Christine M. Brandt

Kontaktperson: Lene Christine M. Brandt tlf: 55 58 89 26

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

Avdelingskontorer / *District Offices:*
*OSLO:* NSD. Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
*TRONDHEIM:* NSD. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
*TROMSØ:* NSD. SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

10.2 Pretest and posttest form (Appendix 2)

**Look at the picture. You are going to try to see the situation from the different persons perspective by answering the four questions below** *in your own words.*

**Se på bildet. Du skal prøve å se situasjonen fra de ulike personenes perspektiv ved å svare på de fire spørsmålene under** *med dine egne ord.*

**1 What is happening in this picture? / Hva skjer på dette bildet?**

_____

_____

_____

**2 What is Hector thinking in this picture? / Hva tenker Hector på dette bildet?**

_____

_____

**3 What is Chris thinking in this picture? / Hva tenker Chris på dette bildet?**

_____

_____

_____

**4 Why do you think they act the way they do? / Hvorfor tror du de handler som de gjør?**

_____

_____

_____
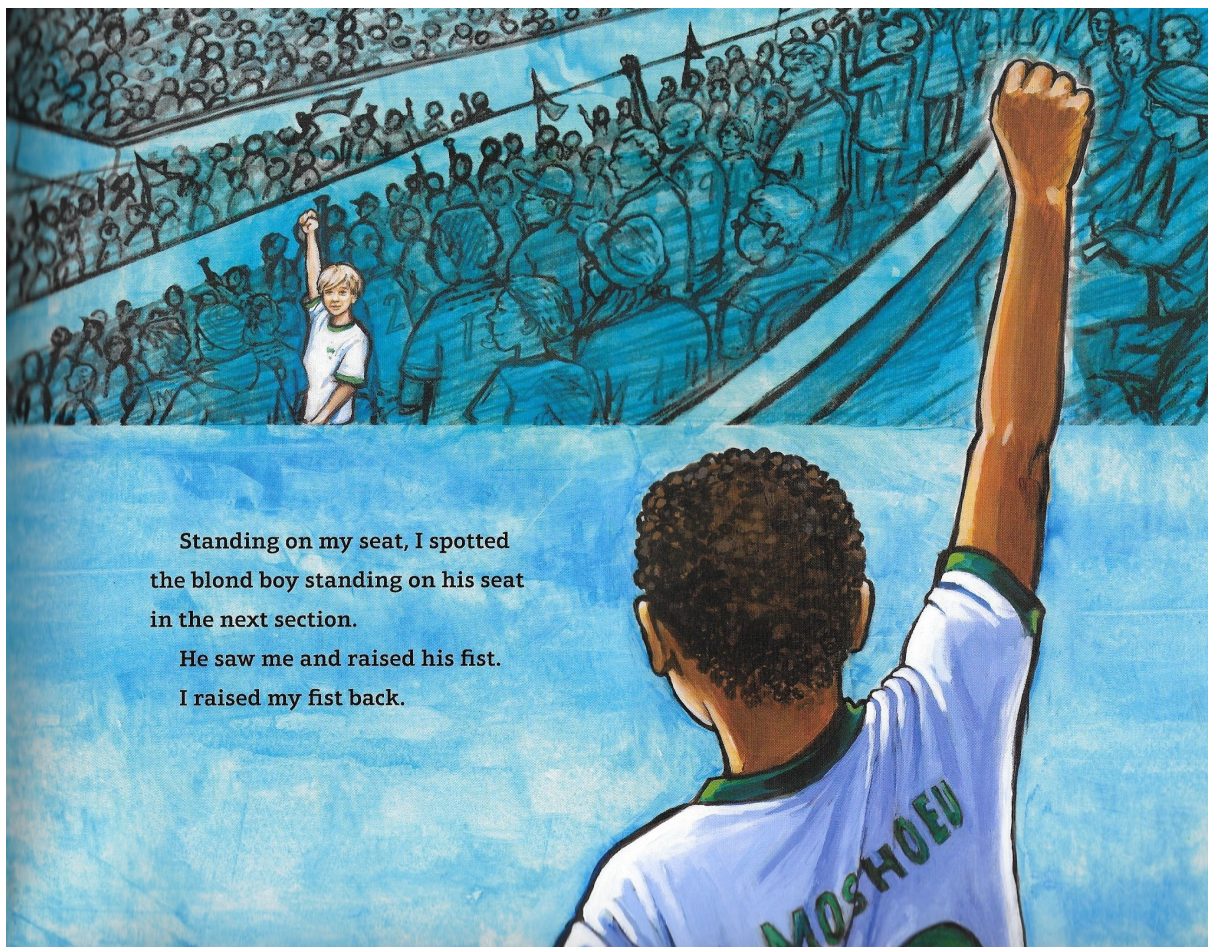
**Your number:** _____     **Date:** _____

## 10.3 Pretest and posttest pictures (Appendix 3)

**Picture used for the pretest:** (The text in the picture was covered during the test)



Standing on my seat, I spotted
the blond boy standing on his seat
in the next section.
He saw me and raised his fist.
I raised my fist back.

**Picture used for the posttest:**

**Til foresatte og foreldre:** Deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt
Dette prosjektet er et arbeid av Lydia Kristin Furnes ved Høgskolen i Bergen i forbindelse med skriving av masteroppgave. Etter planen er prosjektet ferdig i mai 2016.

Jeg skal undervise i skolen for å prøve ut en metodikk for å utvikle interkulturell kompetanse gjennom bruk av skjønnlitteratur, for å se om denne metoden kan fungere som et undervisningsverktøy i engelskfaget. Det vil forskes på "decentering", elevenes evne til å se verden fra ulike perspektiver. Jeg skal selv undervise i klassen og dermed være deltagende forsker og observatør. Deltagerne vil besvare en pretest og en posttest på fire spørsmål, før og etter en uke med intervensjon hvor vi arbeider med å se på boken fra de ulike karakterenes perspektiver. Etter pre- og posttesten vil jeg ha gruppeintervjuer for å se om de gir like svar som å testen. Disse gruppeintervjuene vil jeg bruke lydopptak for å ta opp. Dette vil gjøre det lettere for meg å gå tilbake for å analysere det som sies.

Datainnsamlingen vil i hovedsak foregå mellom uke 49-51, onsdag og torsdag, siden det er dagene jeg underviser i klassen.  Elevene skal jobbe med metoden, og jeg skal samtidig være deltagende observatør i det som skjer. Målet med oppgaven er å finne ut om "decentering" er en evne som kan utvikles og om dette undervisningsverktøyet kan brukes i skolen. Det vil skrives en oppgave om hva som må til for at et slikt opplegg skal kunne anvendes.

Siden jeg ønsker å bruke lydopptak i klasserommet med elevene, trenger jeg at dere som foreldre/foresatte samtykker på vegne av barnet deres.
Lydfilene vil bare brukes til min masteroppgave, og vil lagres på en passordbeskyttet datamaskin. Etter at forskningen er avsluttet vil alt materiale slettes.

Som forsker har jeg taushetsplikt, og alt materiale vil bearbeides uten bruk av navn og identifiserende detaljer. Deltagerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i oppgaven, og eventuelle beskrivelser vil kunne være generelle for klassen. Hvor prosjektet gjennomføres vil også være anonymt. Det er helt frivillig å være med på prosjektet, og man kan trekke tilbake samtykket når som helst. Studien er oppmeldt hos Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Hvis du/dere har noen spørsmål, kan dere nå meg på:

Lydia Kristin Furnes
Tlf: 40605976 / lydiakristinfurnes@gmail.com

Vi har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å la eleven delta i undervisningen

_____ Signert forelder/foresatt / dato

_____ Navn på prosjektdeltager

☐  På vegne av deltager samtykker vi til at kan han/hun bli tatt lydopptak av

**To parents and custodians**: Participation in a research project
This project is a work by Lydia Kristin Furnes at Bergen University College in relation to her masters thesis. The plan is for the project to be completed in May 2016.

I will be teaching in primary school to try out a teaching tool to develop intercultural competence through the use of fictional literature, to see if this tool is usable in the subject of English. The topic of research is "decentering", the pupils ability to see the world from different perspectives. I will be teaching the class myself and be a participant researcher and observer. The participants will answer an pretest and a posttest consisting of four questions, before and after a week of intervention, where we work on looking at the story from the different characters perspectives. After the pre- and posttest I will conduct group interviews to see if their answers match their test answers. These group interviews will be sound recorded. This will make it easier for me to go back and analyse what is said.

The data collection will be carried out between weeks 49-51, Wednesday and Thursday, as those are the days when I teach the class. The goal of the thesis is to find out it "decentering" is a skill that can be developed intentionally, and if this teaching tool is useable in school. A paper will be written about what is necessary for such a tool to be used.

Because I wish to use sound recording in the classroom with the pupils, I need your consent as parents/custodians on behalf of your child. The sound files will only be used for my thesis, and will be stored on a password protected computer. After the research is completed, all material will be deleted.

As a researcher, I have taken on professional confidentiality, and all material will be processed without using names of identifying details. The participants will not be recognizable in the thesis, and possible descriptions will only be general traits of the class. Where the project is carried out will also be anonymous. Participating is completely voluntary, and one can withdraw the consent at any time. The study has been reported to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at:

Lydia Kristin Furnes
Phone number: 40605976 / [lydiakristinfurnes@gmail.com](mailto:lydiakristinfurnes@gmail.com)

We have received the information, and are willing to let out child participate in the sessions.

_____ Signed parent/custodian / date

_____ Name of participant

☐     On behalf of the participant, we consent to her/him being sound recorded