

Cultural Learning in Finnish Primary and Secondary Schools: Examining Låna en Nordbo's¹ Method

A special recognition and thanks to Kimi Kärki, Aleski Huhta, Rami Mähkä, The Nordic Culture Point in Helsinki, Áslaug Hersteinsdóttir Hölttä, Kristinn Sigurðsson, Markus Söderman, Per Skjæveland, Vaisaaren Koulu, Seinäjoki Yhteiskoulu, Ylöjärven Lukio, Jyväskylän Lyseon lukio & IB World School, Äänekosken Lukio, the parents of the students, all the students who gave feedback and Mira Mielonen, without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

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Master's Thesis (pro gradu)
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January 2019

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

¹ Personal translation: Lend A Nordic Person.

Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Department of Humanities

PETERSEN, CAMILLA: Låna en Nordbo: An Analysis of the need of Multicultural Education and Intercultural Communications.

Master's Thesis. 61 pages.

Master's Degree Programme of European Heritage, Digital Media and The Information Society.

December 2018

In this thesis the use case of the multicultural education programme, Låna en Nordbo, will be examined. The need for multicultural education is becoming in bigger demand in the continuous globalising world, as school classes become more diverse and the business world is expanding across borders. Therefore, intercultural skills and competencies are needed in the future. The question of the importance of multicultural education and intercultural communications is investigated, in order to discover if Låna en Nordbo has success in achieving its objectives in educating about other Nordic cultures to Finnish primary and secondary school students.

The case of the Låna en Nordbo programme is interesting in the manner that it brings something new to the school curriculum in Finland. Schools who are visited do not have vast engagement with other Nordic countries, and in some cases the students have never visited the country in focus, nor met a person from that country.

Where the programme is meeting obstacles in the instance of keeping the attention of the students throughout the presentations, as well as the language of delivery i.e. Swedish, as it is not the mother tongue of a majority of the teachers of the programme, nor the students. The lack of understanding is one of the factors preventing the programme in succeeding. Another factor is the delivery of the content as not all teachers have been presenting to or teaching students in the age groups they were faced with before. This poses a challenge to keep the students interested throughout the entire presentation, and to make the country presented relevant to them. The suggestion to combat this is that the Nordic Culture Point would provide the teachers with a seminar on teaching the students that they will visit, as well as making the presentation more interactive by engaging the students' electronic devices that they use on a daily basis. The latter suggestion is based on the observation that the students tended to use their electronic devices during the presentation.

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1. Introduction

In the recent years I have noticed that multiculturalism and globalisation in playing an increasingly bigger role in the Nordic societies, both in profitable aspects, such as increasing cultural diversity in companies. But also at large in less profitable aspects such as lack of understanding of why an influx of new cultures were needed and how they benefit the societies. My mother, as an example, used to be fearful of the unknown, especially when it concerned other cultures than the Danish. She used to not wanting to understand other cultures and considered any other culture than her own as a sort of enemy that threatened her very existence. The reason for this was that she never had much interaction with other cultures and traditions than the ones that persisted in Denmark during her childhood and upbringing. The concepts of globalisation and multiculturalism was frowned upon and approached with a critical mindset. It was only towards the end of her life that she started understanding the meaning of these concepts and moreover what they meant to her personally, when I brought home my fiancé from Morocco. My mother's experience represent a critical group in the Nordic societies. This group does not fully comprehend what globalisation, multiculturalism and intercultural relations can bring in order to grow the country and opportunities in it to the rest of the world. This was emphasised in the 1980s when the Western world encountered "a crisis" when a large group of people had issues adjusting and assimilating to globalisation and the processes that came with it (Friedman, 1994, p. 1), which has resulted in the lack of proper integration of cultural minorities in the societies. Professor Will Kymlicka highlights the example of The Netherlands on this topic; "The Netherlands failed to help the intended beneficiaries –namely, minorities themselves — because it has failed to address the underlying sources of their social, economic and political

exclusion, and may indeed have unintentionally contributed to their social isolation.” (Kymlicka, 2010, pp. 97 – 98). The Netherlands is not alone in this, also Australia has made it difficult for immigrants to get accepted in the society, as they have to take tests to “to see how they fit into” the country (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p. 4). In addition, The United States, although claiming to have acceptance, tolerance and equality of peoples from other cultures, it is “against immigrants keeping their own language -- in school for instance” (2011, p. 4).

This is a problem because the world is becoming progressively more diverse, as more and more societies have an increasingly greater influx of peoples from other countries immigrating (2011). Another important note to this is that many people immigrate because they get jobs in the countries they move to. And as the global business culture grows, countries will as a default have to come to terms with more “cultural differences”. Varner and Beamer stress that even though some people may be working from their home country, they will most likely have to work with people from other countries and cultures if they want their company to grow more; “In order to do your job, you will need to make sense of other people’s cultures.” (2011, p. 4).

There is no argument that learning about other cultures and how to coexist with them is crucial in the world today. And that is why multicultural education is needed.

In this thesis I will examine one of multicultural education programmes that can found in Finland; Låna en Nordbo by the Nordic Culture Point in Helsinki.

I followed the Låna en Nordbo programme over a duration of three months, in five cities, and schools. The schools were primary and secondary schools, and were in areas of Finland where there is not a lot of interaction with other cultures than the Finnish. The aim of the programme is to “give the students outside of the capital region direct contact with an

immigrant from another Nordic country. The theme is often cultural and invites to discussion”

² (The Nordic Culture Point, n.d.).

In order to get a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Låna en Nordbo programme, I will work towards learning whether the research questions; **is the Låna en Nordbo able to generate interest of other Nordic cultures with Finnish primary and secondary school students? And why is it so important?**

Before plunging into the results of the visits and what conclusions can be drawn from them, it is critical to comprehend the base of multicultural education, i.e. culture and how it is constructed, executed and creating identities that distinguish themselves from other cultures.

1.1. What's Culture Got To Do With It?

The concept of culture was first introduced in 1871 by “English anthropologist E. B. Taylor” (Gullestrup, 2006, p. 32). Taylor is considered the first person to conceptualise culture specifically, and characterised culture by quoting Here John Friedl’s work, “Cultural anthropology” from 1976;

“.. that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (2006, p. 32).

This assessment is widely accepted amongst scholars. Gudykunst and Kim, construe culture to be a social organisation “in which human activity coordinated and organized” (2003, p. 14). They continue to elaborate that this means the order of processes that are “created and recreated” continually to give “meaning to” a social collective existence in

² Personal translation from the original Swedish text on the website.

societies (2003, p.14). Gudykunst and Kim applies this to comparison to communication, which is an ongoing and never ending process, and state that culture is the same.

However, it needs to be acknowledged, that as many scholars and researcher there exist on this topic, as many definitions of culture there is. Culture it in itself, seem to be a concept that does not have one true interpretation. But for the objective of delimiting it to the research of this thesis, I choose the definition leaning towards culture being the base of which behavioural patterns, beliefs, morals, art and law is created from in order to make a collective social identity. This is supported by the definition marked by James A. Banks, referencing the work of Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn. Kroeber and Kluckhohn concluded that culture, in its essence is “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the facts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially attached values)” (Banks, 2001, p. 70). Banks later goes on to explain that culture has been used as a mode for survival. And culture is then “created when human groups try to satisfy their survival needs” (2001, p. 71). This implies that culture is not something static, but something that is developed out of special conditions, e.g. geographical environment, social environment and physical environment (2001). In referencing Bullivant’s work from 1984, Banks notes that culture for survival is “an interdependent and patterned system of valued traditional and current public knowledge and conceptions, embodied in behaviors and artifacts, and transmitted to present and new members, both symbolically and non-symbolically, which a society has evolved historically and progressively modifies and augments, to give meaning to and cope with its definitions of present and future existential problems” (2001, p. 71).

Cynthia Weber adds to this by quoting Stuart Hall; “culture ... is not so much a set of *things* -- novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics -- as a process, a set of

practices” (2014, p. 3). What this means is that culture is not something ancient, but something that is cultivated from interactions between people, which creates common understandings, norms and habits. It is therefore, not considered to be exclusive to a country, but rather to groups of like-minded who make a collective meaning of the world (2014).

How this is applied when addressing multicultural education is interesting, as two main factors come into play. One is how the teacher communicates the culture to the group of students, and the other is how the group of students understands and relate to the culture they are learning about.

To further understand how multicultural education has been introduced, it is needed to understand the history and purpose of why it was created.

1.2. Shape of Multicultural Education in Finland

In Finland, multicultural education is a part of the national educational curriculum. Although it has not been explicitly stated when this was implemented, it can be assumed that it has been a part of the curriculum of Secondary schools since the beginning of these in 1889. The reason for this assumption is that in the Finnish National Agency for Education’s (FNAE) publication *Finnish Education in a Nutshell*, they state that as a part of the main objectives of the curriculum of Secondary schools, is to enable the students with “the availability and competence of the labor force, providing educational opportunities for the entire adult population and strengthening social cohesion and equity” (FNAEa, 2017, p. 9). They further elaborate that a component in this is to “...enhance multiculturalism” (2017, p. 9), meaning that students, should be able to interact, comprehend, respect and collaborate with other cultures than their own native culture, when they are graduated. To support this, the most

recent National curriculum of Finnish education from 2016, state that students during their primary and secondary education are required to learn competencies that they can use to ask questions and critically reflect on their own heritage, identity and culture in relation to the world and other cultures (FNAEb, 2016).

One way that the schools in Finland does this, is to include cultural education during the linguistic subjects (e.g. English, Swedish, German, French, etc.) that the students have during their education. By connecting a culture to a language they provide the students with not only competencies in communication of the language but also a relationship to the culture belonging to the language by doing so (FNAEb, 2016). However, many students in areas outside the capital region do not experience contact with other cultures than their own in the duration of their education. The Nordic Culture Point has found a manner of addressing this through their *Låna en Nordbo* programme.

1.3. What Makes *Låna en Nordbo* Valuable to Finnish Schools

There are many multicultural education programmes in the world today, however in order to be as specific to Finnish Education as possible, I have chosen to focus on only one of them; *Låna en Nordbo*, from the Nordic Culture Point.

Låna en Nordbo (the programme) is a cultural education programme created by The Nordic Culture Point in Helsinki, Finland. The programme functions as a part of the Nordic Council of Ministers' 3 year strategy plan that focuses on promoting and positioning the Nordic countries, culture and language in the global sphere (p. 9, 2015).

The purpose of the programme is to educate about Nordic cultures to school students in the ages eight to eighteen. The teachers of the programme are from the different countries in

Nordics and are chosen based on their nationality, and their willingness to travel and teach primary to secondary school students about their home country and their native culture.

The programme is primarily visiting classes where they have Swedish language, and the teachers speak Swedish to the students. Previous teaching experience is not evaluated in the selection of the teachers. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage as it on the one hand gives a broad selection of people from different backgrounds, work experiences, and educations which gives an alluring angle to their selection of content and teaching method. However, it also poses challenges as the teachers selected might not have the needed experience to teach and successfully convey a message to students in the age groups they are presenting to. According to educator James A. Banks the role of the teacher in multicultural education is to be an aid to students in order for them to understand other cultures than the one they have grown up in, which as a result, will make them “effective civic participants in their societies and nation-states” (p. 244. 2001).

In order for the teachers to be successful in doing that, they will need four elements to their teaching, as Banks describe them; “Knowledge”. This refers to both knowledge of “social science”, in which he elaborates is a mechanism of “goals, assumptions and values” are accomplished. As well as “pedagogical knowledge” which entails knowledge of the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural background of the students that they are teaching (p. 245. 2001). Knowing the background of the students will help the teacher to choose and avoid topics to teach the class which can reduce prejudices and create a strategy for effective teaching of the culture they are presenting (2001).

The second block contains what Banks calls “clarified cultural identification”, what this means is that the teacher should be having a “reflective” view their culture and heritage,

and in addition be able to make links between it to other “ethnic and cultural groups”, e.g. Finnish culture and heritage (2001).

The third block includes what Banks refers to as “positive intergroup and racial attitudes”. That refers to the fact that the teacher needs to have a positive view of different cultural, social, racial and ethnic groups and be unbiased (2001).

The fourth and final block contains “Pedagogical skills”, which essentially determines whether the teacher is able to successfully convey their culture and heritage to the students. This block requires the teacher to be able to make “effective instructional decisions” that can help reduce animosity, conflicts, and be able to adjust their style of teaching for a diverse background in a room of students (2001).

Yet, it leaves an important point out, as educational theorist Michael W. Apple argues in his book *Cultural Politics & Education*, if the content of the teaching is not modified according to the scope of the students’ backgrounds the success of the understanding for the content and the relevance it has on the students’ lives may go down (p. 15, 1996). Apple considers it inefficient to implement the same curriculum and teaching style for each group in the society, and highlights that depending on the social, cultural, ethnic and racial group of the students the content should be tailored accordingly (1996).

When the teachers do not have previous teaching experience or lack knowledge from Banks’ model, they might experience difficulties in teaching about their culture and heritage to the students. I will elaborate on the importance of communication later on.

At this point the programme is exclusively conducted in Finland, with the teachers traveling to anything from larger cities to remote villages in the country to visit the schools.

The main idea behind sending the teachers around the country to share about their countries and culture is to give the opportunity of exposure to another culture to the Finnish

students, who may not have had any previous interaction with other cultures besides of the Finnish.

Each teacher decides the content of the presentations as well as the method of teaching themselves. The Nordic Culture Point has not given guidelines that will constrain the content selection and teaching method of the teachers. The only request they have made is that the teachers share about their cultures and home countries to the students.

Although the flexibility is good and leave a lot of freedom and creativity for the teachers to choose the content, it may also limit some teachers of the programme as some of them make one version of content and one teaching method for their presentation which they use for all the different groups that they are presenting to.

However, as the world is becoming increasingly globalised, companies are doing business across borders, hiring more international workforce, and school have an increasing number of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, there is a need for a bigger global model of multicultural education. With the globalisation of cultures, an emergence of new identifications with cultures rise as people are influenced by the cultures surrounding them (Singer, 1998).

The ambition of multicultural education is thus, “to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate effectively in their cultural communities and with the civic culture of the nation-state” (Banks, 2001, p. xxi).

Moreover, it will not only help students participate in the nation-state but also in the global community, as they will gain a broader understanding of other cultures than their own, and how to communicate efficiently with them.

In this thesis, I will explain the importance of multicultural education, why intercultural communications is the key in delivery of content about other cultures, and show

how one multicultural education programme is helping students in primary and secondary schools to learn about and understand other cultures.

To better understand the effect that Låna en Nordbo has on Finnish Primary and Secondary School students, I ask the questions; does Låna en Nordbo change the students' perspective on cultures other than their own? Does it enable the students with competencies to interact and communicate with the cultures presented to them? Is the programme successful in conveying a full understanding of other Nordic cultures? And what are the elements of the teaching strategy that makes the communication of the cultures presented in the programme are the best to create understanding?

2. Methodology

2.1 Ethnographic Fieldwork

As clarified in previous sections, my main method of collecting data on the success of the Låna en Nordbo programme was through observation, interviews and questionnaire of the students. Ethnographic Fieldwork was therefore a major influence on the process of getting answers.

Ethnographic Fieldwork (EF) is a part of anthropology studies and entails the ability to blend into the daily lives of the research subjects of study without disrupting (Olson, n.d.). Initially this methodology is used over a longer time frame than what I employed, as I only stayed one day on average at each school, and a couple of hours in each class. Nonetheless, the strategy of EF proved useful in terms of observing the classroom presentations, and the interviews with the students. According to author, David M. Fetterman, the fieldwork in

ethnographic studies is crucial in order to understand the real conditions, traditions, culture and understanding of the people one is wanting to do research about (Fetterman, p.41, 1989). I needed, in order for my research to be fulfilling to observe, and interview the students who received the Låna en Nordbo presentations.

When conducting interviews it is recommended to take notes, make audio or video recordings (Olson, n.d.), I wrote notes, and collected answers in a Google Form from 3 classes in Äänekoski. I chose to change my way of collecting answers from the students to the Google Form after noticing that the students did not share many details when interviewed face to face. My hypothesis was that the students would be sharing more about their learnings and employing more honesty in their answers as they knew their answers were seen only by me, and that they were anonymous. The change of method has been recommended to ethnographic researchers when the initial strategy of collecting information proved inefficient (Fetterman, 1989). This hypothesis proved right, and I will elaborate on the answers given later on in this thesis. Before starting the interviews and observations I was always introduced by the school's teacher and the teacher of the Låna en Nordbo programme. The school's teachers were often supporting me in my data collection by encouraging the students to share as open and honestly how they felt about the presentations and their learning outcomes. Getting introduced by a trusted "member of the community", Fetterman adds, can help open up conversations with the group studied, get them interested in the study being conducted about them and gain trust as a researcher (pp.44 – 45, 1989). The introduction helped me get enough respect from the students in order to get answers. It has to be noted that the findings and the results made in the observations are subjective to my own understanding of what the students gained from the presentations. Which according to Barbara Turk Niskač can be explained "Ethnography has shifted from being a method for collecting "data" to being a

process of creating and representing knowledge based on the ethnographer's own experiences" (p. 126, 2011).

I modified my interviewing style and wording depending on the grade and ages of the students. I did this in order insure full understanding of the questions I wanted answers to. On this Fetterman explains that certain words and discourse can have different meanings in different cultures. It is therefore important that one is able to modify one's discourse of communication according to the group of people one is interviewing in order to get the best possible results (p.45, 1989).

I chose to keep the names of the students anonymous due to a majority of the parents stating that they did not want their child's name public. For this reason I also chose to make a bigger conclusive results analysis from the interview data since it was spread across school and ages that required parental accept. Äänekoski, which answered the Google form, was a secondary school where the students were of age to make their own decisions, so I chose to disclose that the Google form was collected from there. However, I did not ask for the students' names or gender in order to not have confusing data.

I chose to keep the Låna en Nordbo teachers' names public as they all consented for this. In both the case of the students and the teachers I asked for permission slips to filled to indicate how much information I could include in the thesis, this relating specifically to names, ages, and the school. The schools visited were all asked in advance if I was allowed to join the Låna en Nordbo teacher and observe their presentations and speak with the students afterwards.

2.2. The Questions

During the interviews with the students I chose to focus on their learning outcomes in order to determine whether the teachers had been successful in getting the students interested in their cultures and countries. The questions asked included whether the students had been to the country presented to them before, what they already knew if they learned anything new from the presentation, if they felt that they had got an increased understanding of the culture presented to them and finally if they wanted to visit the country after having the presentation. These question were followed up by asking the students to elaborate on their answers partly to understand if they learned anything new, and partly to learn if they cared about the culture and country presented to them. Otherwise, these questions would have been non-impactful to the research, as they would have been answered by a simple yes or no.

The questions asked had the same meaning and intention for each student. I will expand on the results and findings from these later on.

3. Review of Literature Used

In order to best interpret and comprehend my findings from the observations and answers from the Låna en Nordbo presentations, I needed to draw upon theories and research made in the areas of multicultural and intercultural communications, international relations, multicultural education and cultural understanding. The scholars, of whom I selected literature from all share extensive knowledge, experience and research in the areas. For multicultural and intercultural communications I chose work by Professors of speech and communications William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim. Gudykunst has been writing

and publishing about intercultural communications since 1988, and his results and analysis on the topic are used in academic work frequently (SAGE Publishinga, n.d.). As Gudykunst has done extensive work in area of intercultural communications, so has professor Kim. She has “published over 110 book chapters” on the topic, and was in 2006 rewarded the “top scholar award for Lifetime Achievement from the Intercultural Communication Division of the International Communication Association” (The University of Oklahoma, 2018). Her work together with Gudykunst is serves as a great reference for how intercultural communications can be done successfully, and what methods should be applied in order to make links between cultures. Professor Fred E. Jandt’s work was chosen due to his comprehensive experience and work on “intercultural and international communications, negotiation mediation, and conflict management” (SAGE Publishingb, N.d.). Jandt puts intercultural communications into a different perspective, as he draws on the importance of culture in communications, and how it affects how we communicate in an international setting (Jandt, 2007). His work, therefore, became one of the cornerstones when considering how the teachers of the Låna en Nordbo programme were teaching about their countries and culture, as well as understanding the outcome that the students gained from the presentations. However, it would be unfulfilling to consider Jandt’s work as the one truth to examine the presentations from a communications angle. Therefore, I also chose to include the research made by Professor of International Affairs Marshall R. Singer and Professor Hans Gullestrup on the topic. Singer was appraised for his elaborating work in international communications, and was said to be “a pathfinder in intercultural communication” (Hart, 2004). What makes Singer’s analysis outstanding is that he focuses on the role of “cultural perception in communications” (Singer, 1998), which enables and deeper understanding of cultural identity, both in terms of individual identity and group identity, and the part it plays in communications (1998). This

was especially helpful when considering the activities of the students in the presentations and how they well they were able to maintain interest in the teachers' presentations. In order to further explore where the cultural identity is founded, I chose the work of Professor Hans Gullestrup. Gullestrup has made vast research in cultural anthropology and is a great source for understanding where our concept of identity in culture comes from, how it is implemented in our lives, cultural groups and sub-groups and how we position ourselves in these (Gullestrup, 2006). Another scholar that focuses on cultural identity research is American anthropologist Jonathan Friedman. Friedman's approach is that civilisation is constructed of culture and cultural distinctions, e.g. groups in societies that constructs the notion of a cultural individual and collective identity (Friedman, 1994). His work is, as Gullestrup's is crucial in order to assert the manner of which the students received and processed the information about the teacher of the programme's culture and country, as well as analysing the methods and selected elements that the teachers chose to educate the students on their countries and cultures. To evaluate understanding of multiculturalism in modern society I used the research of Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka. Kymlicka has researched the effect that multiculturalism has in societies, as well as globalisation. His work is key to breaking down how other cultures might be understood in a different way by recipients based on their culture of origin, and the exposure they have had to them and elements of them. As well as selective multiculturalism in the global society (Kymlicka, 2010). To explain the importance of culture in education, I chose the work of American education James A. Banks. What makes Banks' exploration important is that he considers the need of the curriculum in multicultural education, and how a successful teacher should approach educating a diverse group of students about other cultures (Banks, 2001). His theories and models helped to review the presentations from an educational aspect, and assess where they were successful and how they

could be improved. Another important scholar in the field of multicultural education is educational theorist Michael W. Apple. Whereas Banks is much focused on curriculum the method of multicultural education, Apple is more focused on reformation and politics (NEPC, n.d.). Apple's assessment is that "culture and power" are connected and that if there should be more culture in education it has to come from reforming the education system (Apple, 1996). His evaluation is useful for understanding the total effect that Låna en Nordbo has on the schools that it visits, and for why it exists.

Towards understanding the effect the digitalisation has on the students' ability to learn, I have chosen research by Dr. Luke Tredinnick. Tredinnick is specialised in "digital culture, digital history and information theory" (London Metropolitan University, n.d.), and therefore, serves as a great source when it concerns comprehending how the digital information society has an effect in the cultural identity, understanding and awareness (Tredinnick, 2008). This I applied in order to assess whether methods of including digital media, e.g. games, in the Låna en Nordbo presentations. In order to further determine if whether digital games in teaching is effective, I used main theories from Associate Professor Richard Van Eck. Van Eck has done extensive studies on how digital games can be used in education (ResearchGate, n.d.). He is therefore a key player in terms of exploring potential outcomes from implementing games into the Låna en Nordbo programme.

4. Results

To determine the success and effect of the Låna en Nordbo programme, it was essential to observe the classroom presentations made by the visiting teachers, notice the students' reactions to the presentations, and interview the students after the presentation had been

completed. The results of the surveys of the students have two main conclusions; the first conclusion to be made is that the google form was a stronger form of collecting data, honest and elaborative answers from the students. It seemed that they felt less pressure to answer the questions when they were anonymous without the observations from their class teacher or from the teacher of the Låna en Nordbo programme. There can be drawn several reasons from this whether it was a matter of the students not feeling confident enough to answer the questions in detail in English in the class, to saying something that would be perceived by their class teacher as bad, which would have an influence on their grades of the subject. Other reasons could include that the form might have given them more opportunity to think more about their answers, in contrast to having to answer questions on the spot in the classroom.

The questions that needed to be answered after the presentations can be seen below. I wanted to get a feel of whether the presentations were effective in delivering the wished outcome from the teachers.

The student groups were consistent of the ages thirteen to eighteen years old, their Swedish levels ranged from beginner to advanced and the schooling level ranged from primary to secondary school.

The schools I visited were based in south to middle of Finland in the cities; Raisio, Seinäjoki, Ylöjärvi, Jyväskylä and Äänekoski.

The interviews were conducted ninety percent orally where I was asking the students questions after the class and ten percent conducted by Google forms. The latter was due to the frequency in lack of comments to my questions asked in front of the teachers, and as an experiment to see if I would get more elaborate answers from the students. The data from the Google form can be found at the end of this section. The Google form was only used in Äänekoski. The oral interview charts are indicated by the word interview in front of the chart.

In addition to this, I also varied the questions based on learnings from school to school in order to get more answers and feedback on the presentations.

4.1 The Findings from the student interviews

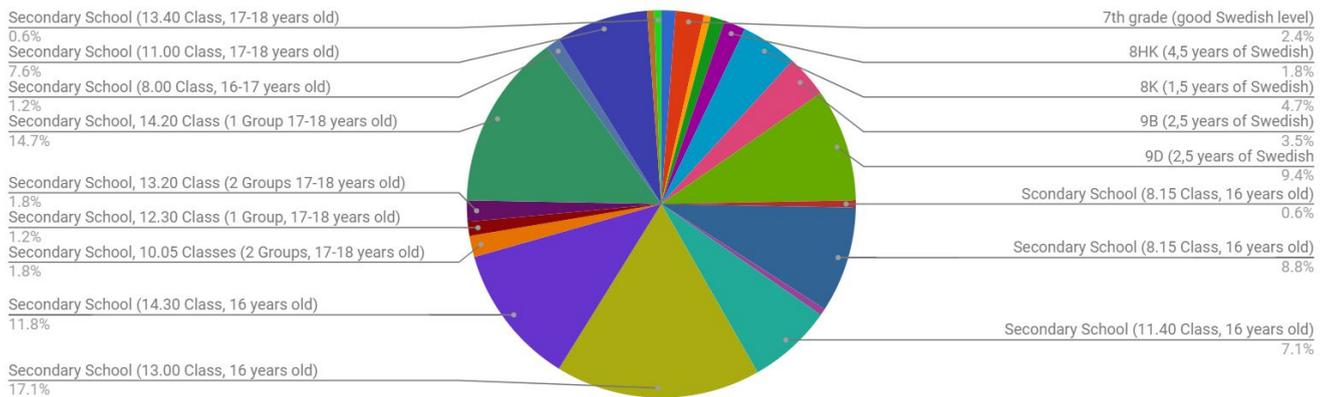
The data is broken down into the questions asked of the students. 170 answers were collected in total from the five schools all together.

Below the answers are documented with the data from the questions asked of the students.

Due to some parents of students requesting not to publish the school name of their children, I have excluded this information from the presented data. The age groups will appear.

Chart 1

School Level Grades Interviewed



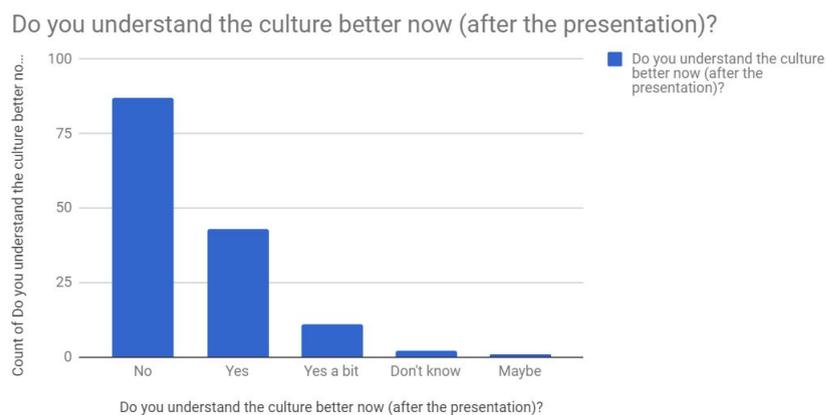
As can be seen in this chart, the majority of the interviewed students were in Secondary School. Primary school is indicated by the numbers of the grade, i.e. 7th, 8, and 9th grade.

The Swedish levels of the students varied, as some students had Swedish for several years, and others were beginners to the language.

In terms of the answers, it must firstly be mentioned that Låna en Nordbo's objective is to educate about and share cultures of other Nordic countries than the one it is in (The Nordic Culture Point, n.d.), in this case Finland.

The overall success of the achievement of that goal is approximately 80%. This number is due to the fact that some students did not indicate that they understand the country or the culture better that was presented to them:

Interview Chart 1



What interview chart 1 shows is the level of understanding of the culture, and the presentation in general after the presentation. One of the goals of the teachers was to create a better understanding of their culture with the students, however the goal has not been a hundred percent successfully met.

The reason for the answer “no” in interview chart 1, was that many of students found it difficult to understand everything in the presentation. This can be traced back to their Swedish level. Most of the presentations were conducted almost completely in Swedish. In

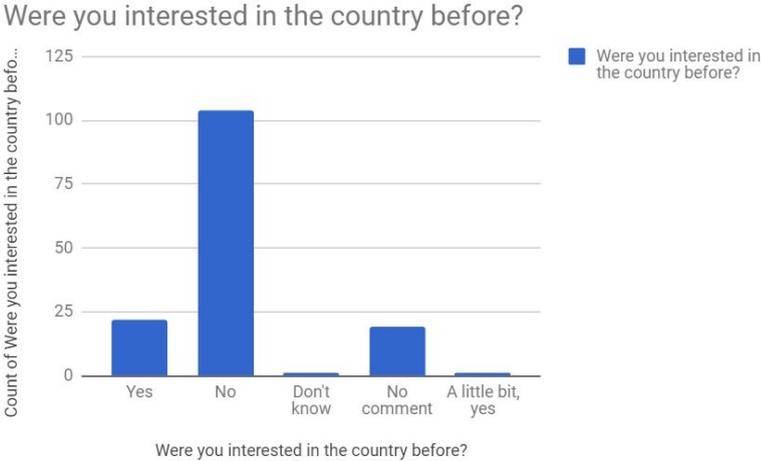
some cases the teachers had to translate what was said into Finnish and English to enhance the understanding.

For the students who said yes, as main factor was the personality of the teacher presenting. The students also pointed out that just listening helped them understand the culture better.

Interesting is to also note the answers “Don’t know” and “Maybe” as they are inconclusive. The students who answered this were not completely sure whether they understood the culture better after the presentation and could not elaborate on their answers.

It should be noted that many of the students did not have an interest in the country presented to them before the presentations, which could be a factor in their attentiveness and eager to understand the culture during the presentations (Interview Chart 2).

Interview Chart 2



When asked about why the interest was or was not there, most of the students could not provide an answer.

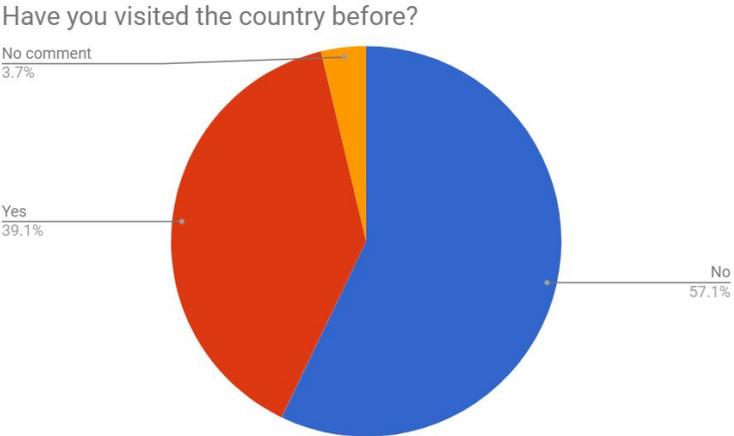
However, most students indicated an interest in the country before the presentation, maintained the interest after the presentation. Their interests were mainly based on the nature of the countries, and less impacted by the culture.

The ones who were not interested in the country presented to them mentioned that the country was too small, that they never thought about it before, and that they only care about specific countries besides of Finland, and the country presented was not one of them.

Countries mentioned that some students cared about was The United States of America, Sweden³ and Tallinn, Estonia.

The reasons for the students answers can also be linked to whether they had visited the country presented to them, indicated by interview chart 3.

Interview Chart 3



The majority of the students had not visited the country presented to them in advance, which also showed in their knowledge of the country and culture during the presentation as many of

³ Sweden was mentioned in an Iceland presentation.

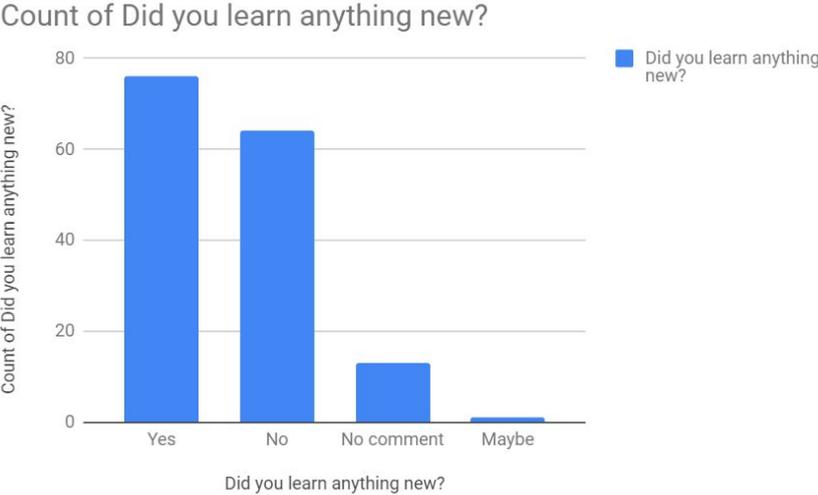
the students did not have existing knowledge and was depended on using the internet in order to find facts in the class exercises.

4.2 The content of the presentations

A vast majority of the teachers that I followed chose to capitalise on their countries' nature more than the culture for a large part of the students they were presenting to, which is what have led to more interest in the nature of the country than the culture from the students.

A main indicator of the success of the presentations was whether the students felt like they learned something new about the countries and cultures presented to them. Interview Chart 4 shows numbers of the students' learning outcomes.

Interview Chart 4



In this chart the outcome of the presentations is visible. The teachers were all hoping for the students learning something new from their presentations, and the answer was a clear yes for

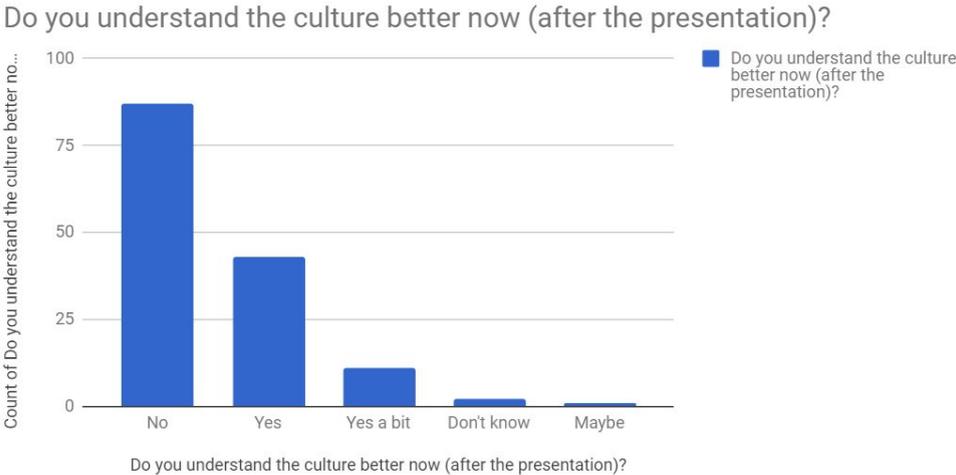
most of the students. However, it must be noted that the amount of students who did not learn anything new was not far behind.

When asked what they learned specifically the students pointed out elements from the culture of the countries, the history of the country, new knowledge of the landscape of the country, the nature, population numbers, the sizes of cities, the traditional food and the schooling system of the country.

The students who answered no, explained that they already knew most of the points mentioned in the presentation about the country, in advance. However, most of the students could not answer this question in detail.

After discovering the learning outcomes of the students, I was interested to know whether they understood the culture of the country presented to them better after the presentation. This is indicated in Interview Chart 5.

Interview Chart 5



What interview chart 5 shows is the level of understanding of the culture, and the presentation in general after the presentation. One of the goals of the teachers was to create a

better understanding of their culture with the students, however the goal has not been a hundred percent successfully met.

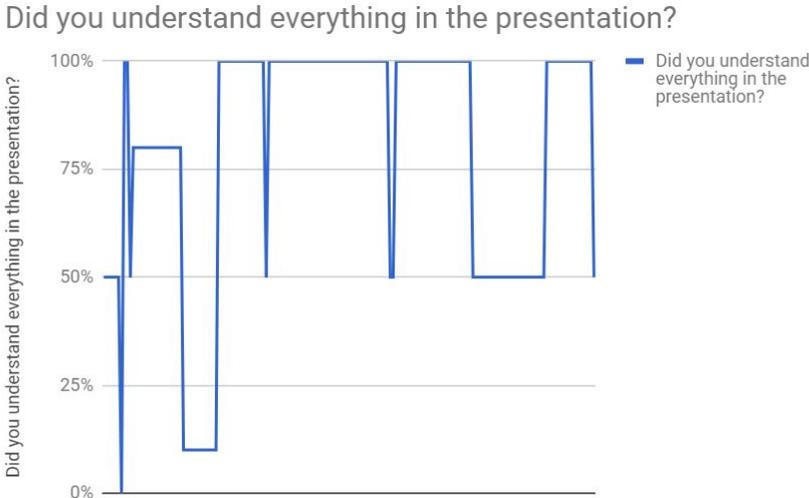
The reason for the answer no, was that many of students found it difficult to understand everything in the presentation. This can be traced back to their Swedish level. Most of the presentations were conducted almost completely in Swedish. In some cases the teachers had to translate what was said into Finnish and English to enhance the understanding.

For the students who said yes, as main factor was the personality of the teacher presenting. The students also pointed out that just listening helped them understand the culture better.

Interesting is to also note the answers “Don’t know” and “Maybe” as they are inconclusive. The students who answered this were not completely sure whether they understood the culture better after the presentation and could not elaborate on their answers.

The level of linguistic understanding can be found in interview chart 6.

Interview Chart 6

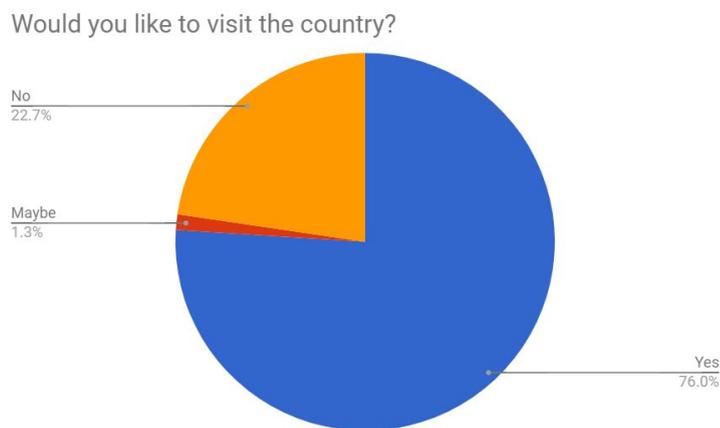


A vast majority understood the presentations completely. Nevertheless, as can be observed, a lot of the students understood only fifty percent of the presentation. This is due to their level in Swedish.

One thing that remained to ask at this point was whether the students were interested enough in the country and culture to want to visit the country after the presentation.

Interview Chart 7 clarifies their answers.

Interview Chart 7



As can be observed, most of the students answered yes, which indicates a great success of the teachers in making the students interested in their countries and culture. However, the interesting point is the students who said no, not because of them answering like they did, but their reasons for it. Their reasons included that the country was too small and too cold⁴. For the rest, the most common answer for saying no to wanting to visit the country, was that it did not have their interest.

The students who said maybe were undecided in whether they wanted to go to the country.

⁴ These answers were giving in feedback to an Iceland presentation.

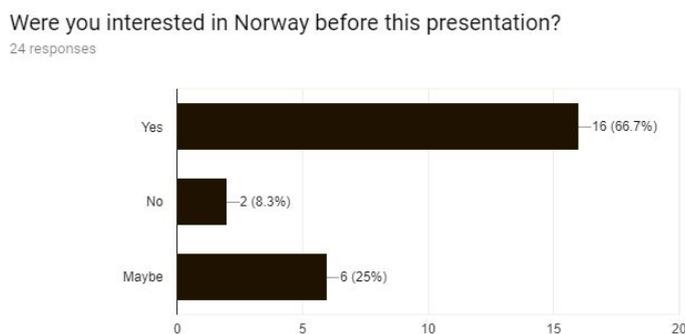
This shows that there were elements of the presentations that did not resonate with the students, which can be connected to them not understanding everything in the presentation, or rather why they had to have the presentation in the first place.

To understand whether this trend of answers would persist in the Äänekoski presentations, I will analyse the results from the Google form answers.

4.3 The Google form responses

The Google form responses consists of 24 students who studies in Äänekoski and is based on the presentation they had by Per Skjæveland on Norway. The form was used as an experiment to see if there would be more elaborate answers to the questions. The results are the following:

Google Chart 1



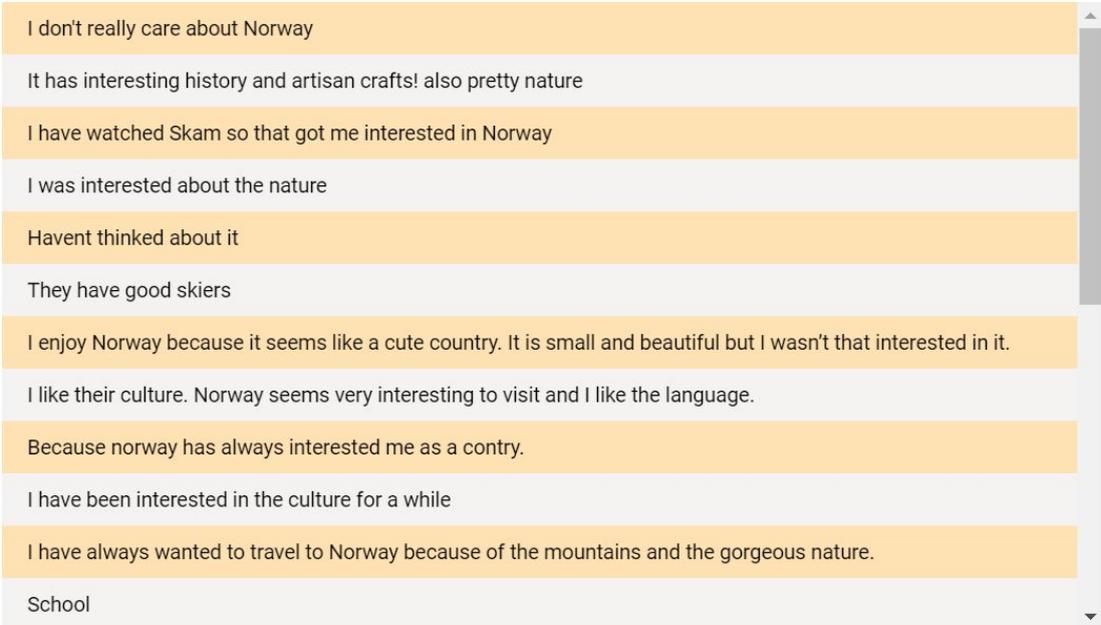
The interesting aspect to be noted in this chart is that unlike the majority of the students interviewed the students who filled the Google form were interested in Norway before the presentation.

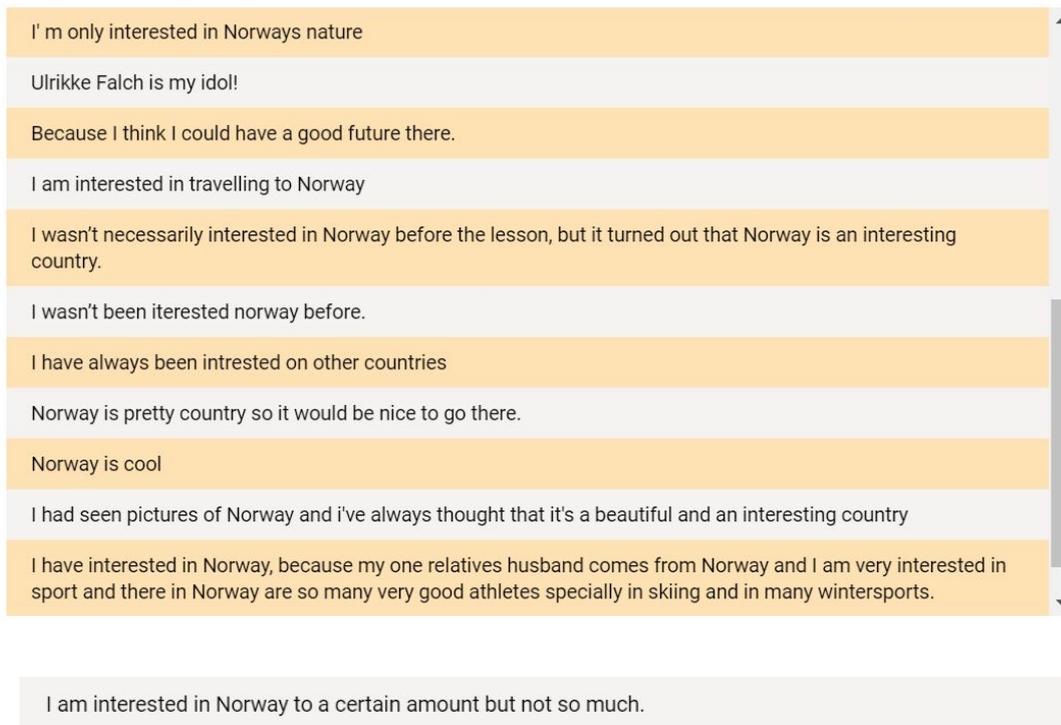
The students were asked to elaborate on their answers, they can be found in the Google Chart 1.1 below. The answers are mixed, due to having to make the question mandatory in order to ensure the question to be answered, the form would have been too long and confusing if I had made individual spaces for yes, no and maybe answers.

Google Chart 1.1

Please tell why you answered what you did.

24 responses





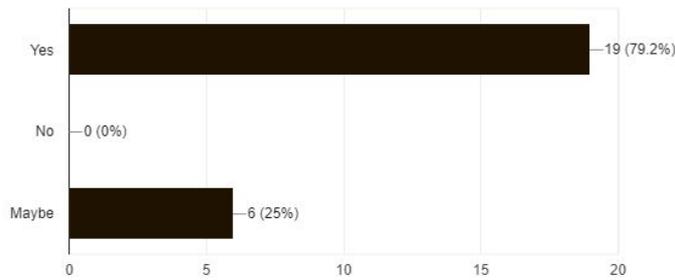
As can be observed, the answers are more elaborate and honest. I believe this is due to them being anonymous. What can be concluded is that the students who answered no were not interested in Norway to begin with, and the students who answered yes were interested mainly based on the culture, history and the country itself. These answers align well with the answers from the students who were interviewed.

Next was to understand whether the students learned something new from the presentation. The result of that can be found in the Google Chart 2.

Google Chart 2

Did you learn anything new from the presentation today?

24 responses

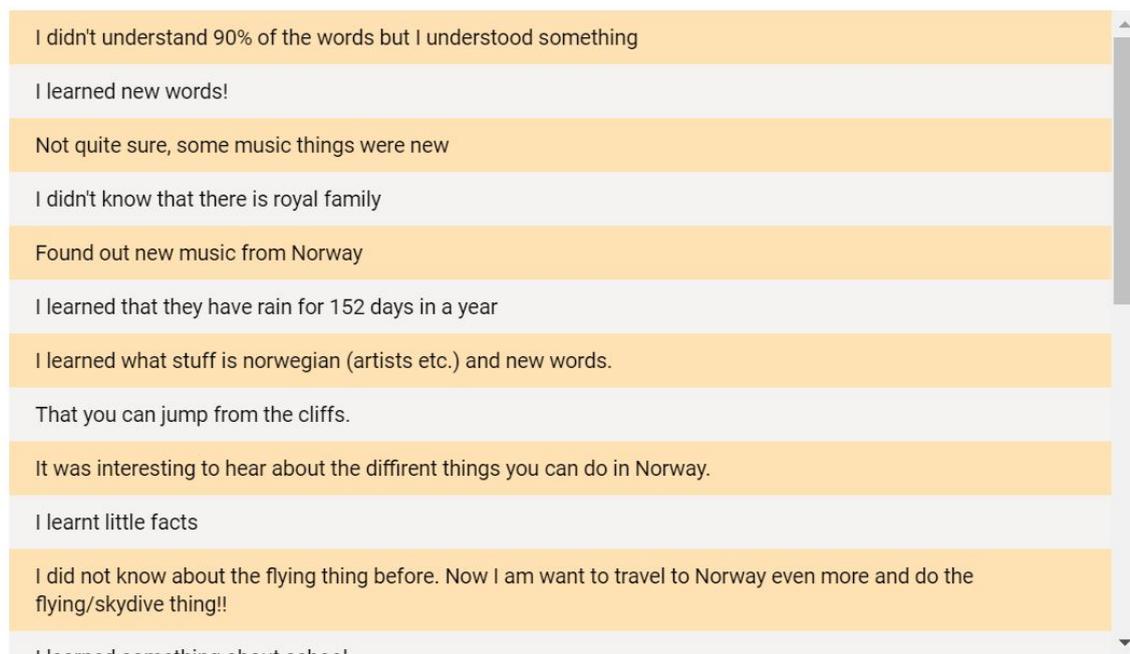


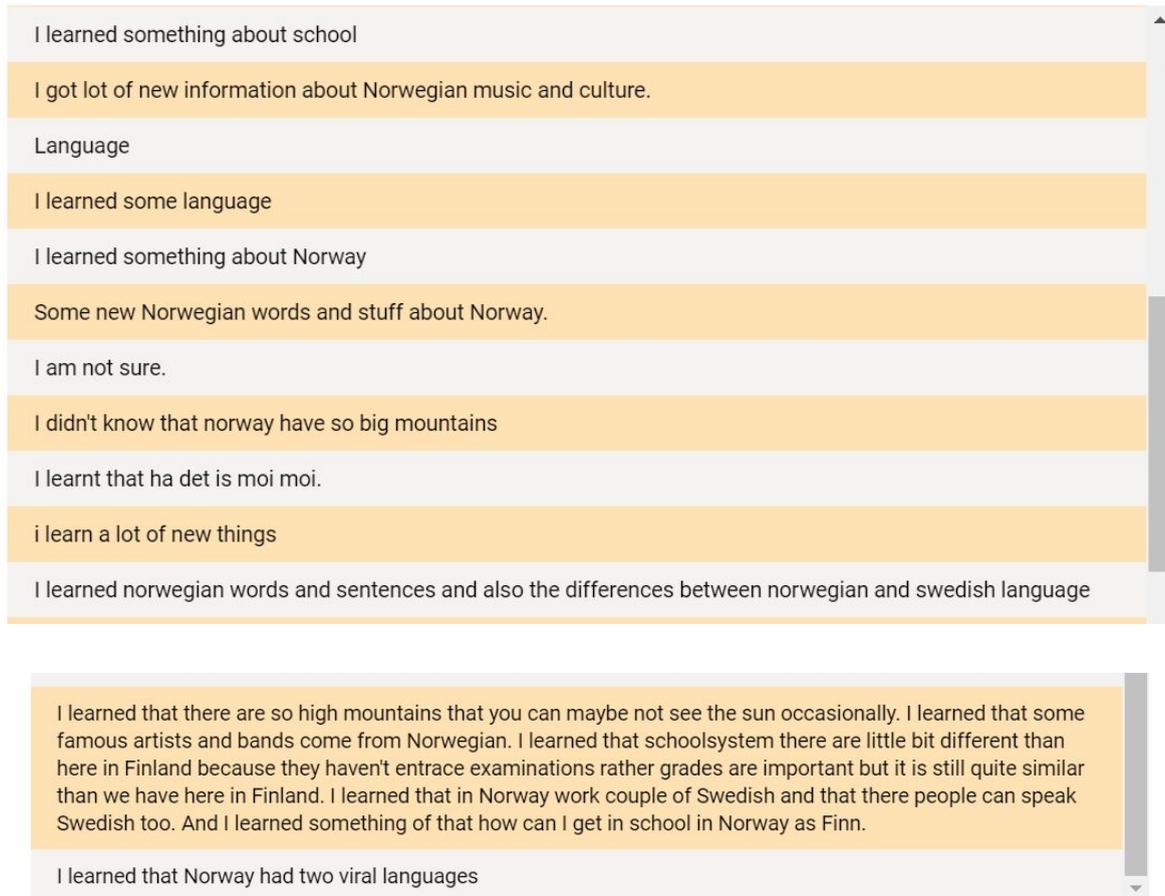
The interesting finding from this chart is that seventy-nine point two percent of the students learned something new, and that there was not one student who said that they did not learn anything new. This is especially striking since a little over sixty of the students that were interviewed stated that they did not learn anything new from their presentations. To explore what the students learned see Google Chart 2.1.

Google Chart 2.1

Please tell why you answered what you did.

24 responses





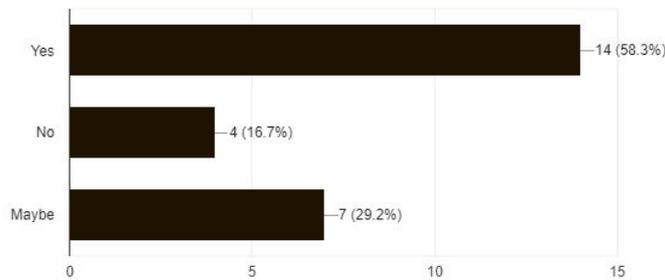
As can be seen here, the students learned various new things from the presentations. There were also honesty in these answers as the students shared what they really learned, and thereby what caught their attention the most from the presentation. It should also be noted that one student was honest about not being able to understand everything said in the presentation, which indicates that the goal completion of the presentation was not a hundred percent successful.

To further understand the impact of their learnings in regard to understanding the Norwegian culture better, see Google Chart 3.

Google Chart 3

Do you feel that you understand the Norwegian culture better now?

24 responses



This time there was a small amount of the students that did not understand the culture better. However, a majority of the students felt that they did comprehend the culture better after the presentation.

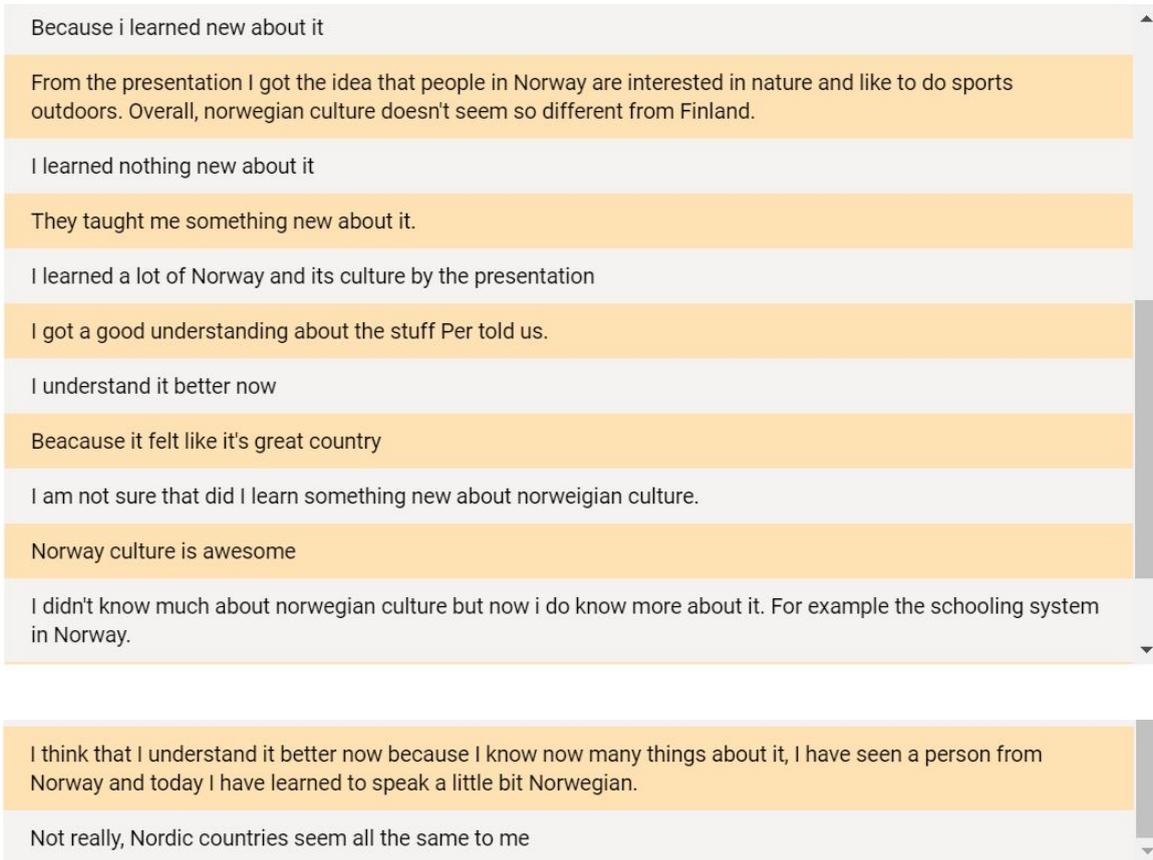
To fully appreciate the answers, I asked the students to elaborate. Their elaborative answers can be found in Google Chart 3.1.

Google Chart 3.1

Please tell why you answered the way you did.

24 responses





What can be concluded from these answers is that the students who felt that they understand the culture better mainly connected it with the nature, as well as a new angle on culture that Per, the teacher, was introducing by showing videos of the nature, base jumping, and images of traditional food, fish, fish farming, the school system and the oil fund.

A main common denominator stands out from all the results of the presentations; the language and the challenges of understanding the presentations fully. To explore a reason why that is, it is necessary to examine the language used by the teachers and the effect that it had on the students.

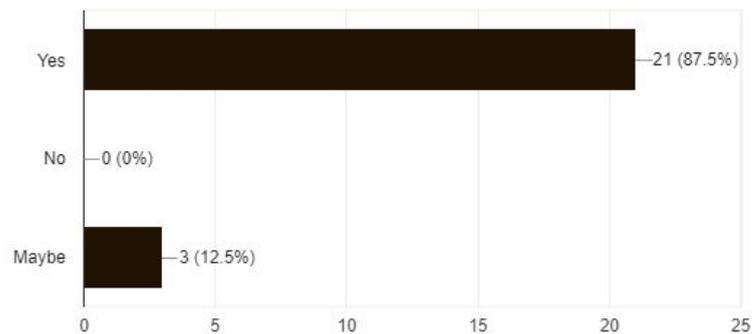
One thing remained to understand, and that was whether the students were interested enough in Norway after the presentation to want to visit it.

Their answers can be found in the Google Chart 4.

Google Chart 4

Would you like to go to Norway after this presentation?

24 responses



What can be viewed in this chart the teacher was overall successful in sparking an interest with the students. However, there were still three students who were undecided whether they wanted to visit the country.

In the sub-chart Google Chart 4.1 I will look at the reasons for why the students wants to go to Norway.

Google Chart 4.1

If you answered no or maybe to the previous question, please tell why.

8 responses



As this question was not mandatory for the students to answer, only 33% chose to elaborate on their answer, which is interesting given that the question was targeted at the students who answered “no or maybe” to whether they would like to visit Norway after the presentation.

There is not a single conclusion that can be drawn from the answers, but what is visible is that elements of activity that can be done in Norway, the language, the nature, and the country itself are all motivators to go to Norway. What can also be seen is that a demotivator for going to Norway is the weather.

4.4 Summary of the results

The results of the presentations was that the teachers were in general successful in conveying new information about their cultures and countries to the students. This is visible through the interest that the students had in the countries and the learning outcomes after the presentations.

Still, there were deviations in the answers from the students, as there were some students who emphasised a lack of interest in the country before and after the presentations. These students did not seem to understand the importance of the country and why they were learning about it. Another reason why the students did not feel like they learned anything new from the presentations was that they did not understand everything said, due to the language used.

I will expand on the gravity of the language and how to make the presentations relevant for all the students further below.

5. Discussion

During the time I was following the Låna en Nordbo programme, I had the great opportunity of experiencing first-hand the effects of it on students in Finland, as well as seeing the teachers' passion for sharing their cultures and countries. The data analysis was especially compelling, as it was telling the success and room for improvement for the Låna en Nordbo programme. In this section I will examine the findings and observations made during and after the presentations. I will also elaborate on why considering language and culture is crucial in the classroom, and something that should be taken into account before visiting the schools.

It is undisputed that Låna en Nordbo is a great programme for educating about other cultures. The programme is unique in the way that it has people from the Nordic countries presenting about their country and culture to students who have had very little to no contact with their home countries and cultures before. Each presentation is different as the teachers of the programme are the ones who choose what to talk about during the presentation and how they are presenting it, including the level of interaction and activation of the students.

However, there are a few factors missing from the programme in order to ensure success. During the survey interviews with the students it became clear that not everyone understood the presentations fully. This was due to the level of Swedish of the students.

5.1 Language, Culture and Education

For all the teachers, except Markus Söderman who presented about Sweden, Swedish is not their native tongue. A couple of the teachers were speaking Scandinavian, which is a

mixture of all the Scandinavian languages and some of them with accents from their native language, which could have impacted in the comprehension level of the students. In order to improve this intercultural communications must be applied to the presentations, as well a consideration of the language in which the presentation is conducted. To do that, it needs to be established why communications is important in teaching, and further what makes communications crucial, as well as the impact that culture has on communications and how effective multicultural communications is executed.

5.2 Communications in the key!

Communications is a wide term, which has biased meanings depending on the context it is defined (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). However, in order to specify it I have chosen Gudykunst and Kim's expansive definition;

“The development of human culture is made possible through communication, and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another.” (p. 4, 2003).

In other words when we communicate we already know what we mean, what we want to say and what we want to other person that we are communicating with to know. We know what we want to say because of our cultural background and through the learned ways of communications from the surrounding environment, be it family members and friends to school teachers during our upbringing. However, the challenge is in knowing whether our message has successfully been transmitted to that other person at the end of our communication, as well as understanding what goes into effective multicultural communications to larger groups consistent of various cultural-, socio-economic- and upbringing backgrounds. What sometimes happen in intercultural communications is that

people communicate in the same way to other cultures that they would to their own. Which, according to Varner and Beamer, is faulty;

“To pretend that we’re all alike underneath [from our upbringing and cultural background] is wrong and can lead to ineffectual communication or worse” (p. Xiii, 2011). This can also be qualified as ethnocentrism, i.e. when one is unable to understand others’ way of thinking and only accept one’s own as the correct one (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). In other words it means that one uses their own cultural background as the main reference and is unable to understand or adapt to other cultures around them (2003). What should be the case is that one is able to adapt to their surroundings and understand different cultural backgrounds that might present (2003). This is important as denying that other cultures play role in communications, is hindering in business relations (Varner and Beamer, 2011). That can also be targeted on education in Finland, as the objective of the education in Finland, is to prepare the students for employment after they have graduated (FNAEa, 2017).

How is successful communication done across cultures? To answer this question, multicultural communication should be introduced.

5.3 Communicating Effectively Across Cultures

As communications, multicultural communications is likewise a big topic, as is comprehending how to effectively communicate across cultures. It is crucial to understand not only one's own culture of origin but also the culture of the persons that one is communicating with (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003, p.4). Which in turn will enable one to view one's own culture in the perspective to others, as well as being able to reflect on one’s own culture and judge it objectivity (2003, p. 4).

Why this matters to be aware of is that there do exist limitations when it concerns two individuals from two different cultures communicating with each other, which makes the feedback and interpretation of messages culturally charged, i.e. one interprets and understand messages based on one's own culture (Gullestrup, 2006).

Professor Fred E. Jandt compliments the notion that communications is a part of culture in his book *An Introduction to Intercultural Communications; Identities in a Global Community, Fifth Edition*, from 2007. He notes by the work of Alfred G. Smith from 1966 and Godwin C. Chu from 1977 that communications is considered an integral part of how culture is perceived and to study one without the other would not be sufficient. Jandt elaborates "Culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood with understanding the culture it supports" (2007, pp. 27 – 28).

Strictly speaking, this means that if one wants to understand how to communicate effectively with people from another culture, one must, as emphasised by Gudykunst and Kim by the use of Sumner, understand the culture of the people one communicates with (2003).

In some cases communications is used as a type of symbolic action, i.e. text, speech, facial expressions, and body language (2003). Examples of cultural symbolism is when an Italian person emphasises their speech and words with hand gestures, or when an Indian person shakes their head from side to side in agreement.

Culture is in the core of our being, and it is what helps us learn and navigate in the world of diversity, but it should also help us understand and communicate with people from other cultures.

A question arises from the above; how can one be sure to understand every culture one communicates with?

We know that it is important to consider culture in communications and that interpreting messages delivered by people from different cultures may have a different meaning than the one we understand when we hear the words spoken. This is especially challenging when faced with a culture that we have not encountered before, as our communicational behaviour is based on the cultures and cultural influences we have grown up with (2003).

In smaller groups where everyone shares the same cultural background this may be simple and done through the study of the culture in advance. Still, as the world is increasingly becoming more global, various cultures will be represented in the groups that one interacts with (Kymlicka, 2010). In the case of Låna en Nordbo this means that the teachers may encounter classrooms where there will be a percentage of students who do not share the Finnish, or Nordic, culture. Professor of International Affairs, Marshall R. Singer, helps to understand this as he states that intercultural communications, or multicultural communications is not only communicating between cultures but it is also understanding, communicating and “overcoming barriers” with groups inside of the cultures (1998, p. xiii), and adds that in the duration of human history people have been fearful of groups that are different from the group that they are a part of and that this fear has resulted in violent clashes where the fearful group tried to beat down the group that was different (1998). This mentality can still be found in the world today, and that is why it is important to “develop skills to understand the impact of culture, both on ourselves and on others” (1998, p. xiv).

As there are many cultural influences in the globalised world, understanding and relating to other cultures are becoming increasingly more challenging. Groups that before consisted of singular cultural communities, have fragmented into sub-groups that are created inside of cultures such as organisations, a classroom of students of the same age with

exposure to the same environment, and more who have developed their own behaviour in communications, which is shared by the people who belong to the same group (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Jonathan Friedman explains that this phenomenon is the result of the development of the role of culture in society, which can be broken down to three clarifications, what he called “Culture I, Culture II and Culture III” (1994, p. 88). Culture I represents the ancient history of a culture, i.e. the mentality or symbols of a people. Culture II is the display of ethnic identity, i.e. language, social circumstances and heritage. Finally, culture III is marked by the influences of the evolving society, the willingness to co-exist with the past society and the ability to exercise its own habits and traditions (1994). Culture III, is therefore a form of opting out of the current organisation of society, which at times has been effective for movements (1994). Ultimately one has to recognise that every person comes from a different culture, which shares traits with what Hans Gullestrup calls the “Core Culture”, which is a shared culture of peoples who are from the same geographical and ethnic background (e.g. people who are born and raised in Finland have cultural elements that all accept as a part of their culture and what they connect with being Finnish) (2006, pp. 204 – 205). The sub-cultures therefore co-exist with the core culture in the societies (2006).

All these cultural identities exist together in individuals, as Friedman’s definition entails, culture I and culture II are a part of the core cultural identity, culture III serves as the identity for the sub-group one belongs to (e.g. the group that likes ice hockey, the girls who all like Justin Bieber) (1994). Janette Webb supports the notion of different identities as a part of societal organisation. In her assessment, the identity is determined by the circumstance in which one find oneself, e.g. at work, in school or politically (2006). The creation of multiple cultural identities is in fact, due to the traditional organisations of society when they implemented new economic and social conducts in life, such as consumerism, and with that a

large influx of cultural influences in art, food and music (2006). However all these influences are being incorporated into the core culture of the identity.

The notion of a core culture can also be closely connected to the linguistic angle.

Singer quotes Benjamin Lee Whorf;

“We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.” (1998, p. 3).

What the above elucidates is, as the culture is intimately linked with language, that the cultural groups can be defined based on the mother tongue of the group. This is important knowledge when considering that connecting and communicating with a group of people from another culture, the wider the knowledge of the group’s language the better one is able to communicate with the group.

Yet, the language should not be determined as the sole component of which makes a cultural group. A cultural group consists of many factors with the language being only one of them. Further, group segmentations include physical traits, such as those that are genetically inherited from parents. These conclude the physical identity (Singer, 2003, p. 4). The difference between the linguistic, i.e. the cultural and the physical identity is that while the physical identity is a manifested one, the cultural identity is dynamic (2003, p. 4).

Besides of being able to connect cultures, language also gives the sense of belonging to something. It is what makes one feel safe (Singer, 2003). Which is why that when communicating with another culture, knowing the language of it is one of the parts of the key to successfully convey one’s message.

Now that it has been established that language is an important component of communications, let us take a look at the message delivery in a communication context.

Jandt developed a model to cover the main ingredients in efficient communications; source, encoding, message, channel, noise, receiver, decoder, receiver response, feedback and context (Jandt, 2007, pp. 33 – 34).

The source is the person who communicates, e.g. the teacher of the Låna en Nordbo programme. Encoding refers to the act of communicating thoughts into reality, either as words or as a symbol. E.g. when the teacher of Låna en Nordbo is talking about their country to the students. The teacher knows what the country and the culture of the country means to them, and the encoding process is where the teacher communicates this meaning to the students. Message is the result of the encoding process, i.e. the teacher is able to present their country in words or images to the students. Channel is, as the word implies, the actual channel or media in which the message is delivered. E.g. the presentation done by the teacher. Noise is what is alters the message in some way, this can be either through sounds in the surroundings, i.e. cars passing on the street, the school bell ringing, school announcements on the loudspeaker in the classroom, students talking between each other, music, and more. It can also be internal feelings and thoughts, as in Jandt's example if a student is hungry or tired (2007). And finally what Jandt refers to as "Semantic noise" which is caused by different interpretations of the message delivered by the teacher (2007). It can be that the image they show has a different meaning for the student's culture than it does for the teacher's, it can also be induced by the teacher's use of language, e.g. if the teacher is not a native Swedish speaker their message may not be understood fully, or if the teacher uses foul language such as swear words during their delivery (2007).

The receiver is the person for whom the message was intended. E.g. the students who are having the Låna en Nordbo presentation. Decoding is when the receiver is actively trying understand the message communicated to them. E.g. the students trying to understand what

the teacher is saying. Receiver response is the response the receiver has to the message, e.g. if the teacher made a joke or a funny comment during their presentation and the students laugh. Feedback is the success rate of the message delivery to the receiver. E.g. the students' level of new learning, interest and understanding of the country that was presented to them (2007). This is normally done through surveys, and other means of collecting feedback from the receivers. I.e. when I conducted surveys with the students after the presentations.

Context is the environment, or explained differently, the physical place in which the message delivery is taking place. E.g. the school classroom. The location of the communication can predict the outcome of the message delivery. E.g. if the location is a place of choice, or has a significant meaning for the receiver they may be more keen on understanding the message, as to if it is a mandatory place (2007). The environment, therefore, has a substantial role in the success of delivery, and can for this reason be viewed as challenge for the teachers of the Låna en Nordbo programme as the students are in the classroom due to their curriculum. Moreover, the presentation does not reflect on their grades of the subject class that the teacher is visiting, thus the teacher has to find a way to make their message relevant to the students. Additionally, culture should also be considered as “every culture has its own worldview; its own way of thinking, time and human nature; its own way of perceiving self; and its own system of social organisation” (2007, p. 34). The understanding of these can help the teacher to effectively create associations between the topics, and images presented to the students. E.g. comparison of national days and their meanings between the teachers' country and Finland, traditional food, population size, cities, etc. By giving the connection between the two cultures the students may be more receptive towards the message of the teacher and may as a result learn more from the presentations (2007).

Although Jandt's model is good, two important points are missing; the content and the delivery of the messages to the receiver. This will be covered in the following section on multicultural education and teaching styles.

Another important factor in the teaching is the multicultural education theories and methods. A main challenge for many of the teachers was to keep the students' attention during the entire presentation, and that the learning outcomes of the students did not match with the objectives stated of the Låna en Nordbo programme. The suggestion to improve this is to carefully choose the content of the presentations based on the age group of the students, make the content relate to the Finnish context and increase the level of activity of the students using their electronic devices for education in an AR culture game. This will help the students to understand the impact of the country in relation to Finland and the world, as well as increasing the level of personal learning from playing the game as they will be forced to stay focused during the whole presentation in a way that is fun for them. This suggestion was made based on the notion that the students were using their electronic devices during the presentations. The teachers will as a result feel that they had more success in conveying their culture and country to the students and Låna en Nordbo will experience the objective of educating students about other Nordic cultures fulfilled.

5.4 We do need an education!

As concluded above, communications is essential to cultures and to intercultural communications. However, when specifically addressing the delivery of messages in a teaching context, it is needed to emphasise the content of the message and the style of delivery of it. In this section I will explore, analyse and conclude the role of multicultural education.

Låna en Nordbo serves as a great example of multicultural education, by its intelligent use of country native teachers presenting and teaching about their home countries to students in Finland. This gives the programme a sense of authenticity as it is able to deliver a real person from the country in focus, who will be for most of the students, the first contact they have ever had with that culture and country. Nevertheless, where the programme could be considered to be overlooking is on the priority of the teaching experience of the teachers of the programme. The lack of this may cause some teachers to not be completely prepared for the classrooms they enter, as well as the lack of variation in their delivery of the content of the messages. The suggestion is not that Låna en Nordbo should become limited by demanding that the teachers of the programme has prior teaching experience or education, but that the Nordic Culture Point should provide an introductory course on intercultural communications and multicultural education. In this way the teachers will be more prepared for the classrooms, and can adjust their message delivery to the group of students they are presenting to.

Furthermore, the Låna en Nordbo programme should also have specific goals that needs to be met by the teachers; these can include the level of understanding of the presentations from the students and the increased interest in the countries and cultures that was presented. These goals will help the teachers, the programme coordinator and the schools to understand whether there was a return on investment in terms of resources and time used and spent in preparing for the school visits.

Ultimately what programmes such as Låna en Nordbo are doing is that they are boosting the educational curriculum of the country and school in which they appear by contributing a unique opportunity for learning of intercultural relations and understanding of the students, and give them, in some cases, their very first intercultural encounter.

Howbeit, the two overall goals of multicultural education are to reform the schools in which it appears, “so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” (Banks, 2001, p. 3). As well as “give both male and female students an equal chance to experience educational success and mobility” (2001, p.3). The content of the multicultural education curriculum should not only impact the students but also the teachers, and the administrators of the school in order to actively change view points, behaviours and attitudes, along with the culture, standards and goals of the school (2001).

Unfortunately, a visiting programme, like Låna en Nordbo, is not enough in order to achieve these goals in the schools. The decision to implement multicultural education in the curriculum has to be initiated by the school, who then communicates the change to ministry of education. The influence a visiting programme can have is introduction to other cultures, including giving the tools and knowledge in how to interact and communicate effectively with other cultures than the students’ own native culture.

How a visiting programme can do just that is by incorporating elements of the multicultural education curriculum capitalised on the following components; content integration, the knowledge of the construction process, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy (Banks, 2001, p. 4). Elaborating on the components; content integration focuses on the amount of examples the teacher can give from various cultures and cultural groups, principles, main concepts, theories and generalisations in what they are teaching about (Banks, 2001, p. 5). In the context Låna en Nordbo it means that the teacher selects elements from their culture and compare them with the Finnish culture and facts about the country. The knowledge of the construction process targets the learning process of the students and how the teacher is helping the students understand, explore and conclude how implied cultural “assumptions, frames of references, perspectives and biases” are constructed within the

culture in focus (Banks, 2001, p. 5). In the case of Låna en Nordbo it means that the teacher of the programme actively help the students understand the way of thinking of their culture and fellow country men, so that the students will be able to relate to the mentality of the culture and country presented to them. This is important because the students are only fully able to relate to what Apple terms their own, hegemonic, i.e. dominating cultural background (Apple, 1996, p. 14). That means that the students will comprehend the teacher's culture and cultural mentality from the perspective of their own cultural mentality, which essentially will not result in the goal that the teacher has for the presentation. Therefore, it is important that the teacher is able to link their own culture and mentality to the culture and background of the students. Prejudice reduction, is as is written about reducing prejudices between the students' own culture and the culture they are learning about. For Banks this specifically means from a racial point of view, such as attitudes towards other cultures and races, and how these can be reduced through teaching materials and methods (2001, p.5). In the context of Låna en Nordbo it means that the teachers are able to break down stereotypes about their country that Finnish people may have, or simply generating an interest of their country and thereby placing it on the map for the students that they are presenting to. The final point, an equity pedagogy, refers to the ability of the teachers to be able to adjust their teaching toward the group of students that they are teaching. Banks capitalises on the racial group aspect, as well as social class (2001). However, to understand where Banks is coming from it is necessary to highlight that he studied multicultural education in the United States of America where race and social class play a bigger role than they do in Northern Europe. Nonetheless, his theories on multicultural education can still be modified to the Northern European reality and teaching of one Nordic culture to another. How this applies to Låna en Nordbo, is that the teachers of the programme are able to adjust their presentations and their presentation style to the group of

students that they are presenting to. E.g. if the students have never heard anything about the teacher's country or culture before, it is essential that the teacher will introduce these to the students, if the students have heard or learned a bit about the country and culture already the teacher can amplify in detail about their culture and mentality of the people of the country. If the group of students that the teacher is presenting to are inactive, the teacher must find a way actively engage the students in the presentation. If the students are very active, the teacher can give the students more advanced tasks to explore and learn more about the culture and mentality in focus. Moreover, the teacher must not assume that the same presentation style and content can cultivate all the various groups of students that they are presenting to. Apple emphasises the importance of not aiming for a national curriculum that will contain the same elements of teaching methods and content for all cultural, racial and social class groups of students (1996). This can be applied to Låna en Nordbo, as was observed through most of the presentations, the teacher did not modify their presentation method or content for the different groups of students that they were presenting to. By modifying the teaching method and the content for the groups that the teacher interacts with, the success rate of their goals to promote their countries and create cultural understanding can be increased.

What these four components will help the teachers with is to facilitate a new understanding about their culture and country to the students, and help the students create an identity in which they are able to relate to the cultural mentality by connecting that culture with the one they have been brought up with. I.e. the process of creating a local versus global cultural identity (Friedman, 1994, p. 27).

In addition, all these four components will help the teachers create presentations that both resonate with the students, it will make the students learn about their country and culture, as well as giving the students tools to work and interact with their culture in the future.

On the topic of the content and the method of teaching, one observation that stood out from most of the groups that was visited by Låna en Nordbo was the use of technology and electronic devices in the classrooms during the presentations. The devices were used even when the teacher did not wish for the students to use them in the presentations. The usage of these devices is something which not only the teachers of the Låna en Nordbo programme is affected by but also the teachers who normally teach the students. In order to counter this challenge, the recommendation is that the teachers of the Låna en Nordbo programme actively engage the devices in their presentations. The reason for this recommendation is that the usage of smartphones in Europe has grown 73 percent during the last three years, and is estimated grow a further 92 percent in the next two years (Statista, 2018). This means that the number of students who actively use their smartphones or other electronic devices in the classroom will increase as well.

Therefore, in order for the Låna en Nordbo programme to stay contemporary with the environment and world, it needs to incorporate digital media into the presentations.

5.5 Culture in the Digital Information World

It is known that the digital information development has had an increasing role in the formation and reformation of cultural values globally (Tredinnick, 2008, p. 3). In fact, the technological developments have advanced a immense on communications to the extend where it has become a central part of it in today's world (Varner and Beamer, 2011). We use it for sending messages, share images and videos faster with people in our network (2011). The expansion of technology gives an even bigger access to the global market, which makes understanding cultures more important than ever (2011).

Tredinnick elaborates that first and foremost it must be acknowledged that there is a belief that culture comes from social systems with common “social relations”, i.e. “values, systems, traditions and beliefs” (2008, p.3). Tredinnick continues to explain that the product of “social and cultural practises” is defined to be literature and art (2008, p.3). There is a wish in culture to stand out, be individual, and create a gathered mentality around the products, or objects that has been qualified as a part of the social and cultural practises that are directly linked to the cultural and social identity of groups who associate with them (Tredinnick, 2008, p. 4). In this way culture becomes a basic part of what creates the human identity, which makes it incredibly powerful (2008).

The arrival of the digital age has been a major influence in the evolution of the understanding and definition of culture. Literary critic, F.R. Leavis supports this statement, as he claimed in 1930 that culture is not a static concept, but dynamic. He went on to say that “civilisation” and “culture” will be “antithetical terms” (Tredinnick, 2008, p. 7). In other words, the understanding of culture and civilisation is under constant change and will be contradictory to each other with the development of communication, mass media and the industrialization (2008). On the contrary to what F.R. Leavis believed, English author, Matthew Arnold, in his work *“Culture and Anarchy”* from 1869, stated a belief that the influence of the industrialization would be the decline in a commonly shared culture in which a group of people would share the same values. His worry was that with the rise of the machines, people would resort to individualism, which would essentially result in deterioration of values (2008). Were Leavis and Arnold right? Did culture slowly start to disappear with industrialization? It can be argued that the traditional notion of culture was changed with the industrialization and the arrival of the mass-media. Nonetheless, the machines did open the gateway to a new understanding of culture, a “social being” as Karl

Marx stated in his model of “socio-political superstructure” in 1859 (2008). Of course Marx was referring to the social system of the society where everyone plays their own role in the production, and will be in groups based on their socio-economic background and education. The point here is that with societal development, comes new ways of thinking and perceiving oneself in the world. An undeniable truth is, whether Arnold and Leavis liked it or not, the industrialism and now technology is dominating the world we live in. And with this domination comes a new understanding of what “cultural values, practises, traditions and beliefs are, because with technology culture is under constant transformation, spreads and gets implemented in the global world” (2008, p. 21). Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka provides examples on how the world is becoming more multicultural in his article *The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies*, from 2010; it is taking elements from various cultures, such as traditions, food, music and clothing and embedding it into the society (p. 98). Examples of this is Japanese food, such as sushi that can be found in Finland and celebrations such as Valentines Day and Halloween in the Nordic countries. Kymlicka refers to Alibhai-Brown’s term of this, the 3S model; “samosas, steel drums and saris” (2010, p. 98). The 3S model also points out that the selection of elements from other cultures does not enhance the understanding of the cultures from where they originated, but that it is a superficial way to treat cultures for the pure purpose of entertainment (2010).

What this means to multicultural education is that teachers need to make learning about new cultures engaging and entertaining for the students, and be careful of already culturally adapted elements from other cultures in Finland, as they may have another meaning to the students that is not necessarily the one intended from their culture of origin.

As noted earlier, a main observation made during the presentations of Låna en Nordbo was that the students were using electronic devices a lot during the presentations. Returning to Tredinnick's sentiment that technology is increasingly dominating every day life of people, confirms that there is a need to meet the students where they spend most of their time, on electronic devices (2008). By activating the electronic devices the teachers might get a higher return on investment from their presentations, and the students might as a result learn more about the culture presented to them.

My suggestion is to implement an augmented reality (AR) game that the students can play with their phones and tablets.

Associate professor Richard Van Eck highlights the use of digital games in learning and education; it has to be understood that learning through games is not the best way for everyone, although engaging and activating students through the use of games might stir different emotions and a deeper understanding of the topic that the game is about (2006). Moreover, a critique of this learning style should also be mentioned, as it has not been concretely proven with tangible results that games are effective as a learning medium. It can be viewed as one method of education that activates the learners. Van Eck continues, "Games embody well-established principles and models of learning. For instance, games are effective partly because the learning takes place within a meaningful (to the game) context." (2006, p. 4). In other words, the game forces the player to relate to the environment of it in order to play and complete it. This makes it possible for the player to learn more about the context of the game.

Assistant Professor Kurt Squire, addresses a possible side effect of video games, as he worries that it might strip students of their creativity in the learning process. He, however, also praises the use of video games in education as it allows a different type of interactivity as

games are able to generate an individual conception and experience of the topic in focus for the student playing, which can make a better connection to the personal relevance of the topic for the students (Squire, 2012).

The suggestion for an AR game for Låna en Nordbo is therefore based on the content being that of cultural and historical importance for the countries presented. The suggestion for the AR game is based on increasing the engagement of the students in the presentations, so that they will not just feel like they learned about the country, but that they will feel a connection and understand the importance of the country, its history and culture to the world and Finland. An outcome of this can be that the students will feel equipped to talk with people from the country effectively, which can help them in the future when working or meeting a person from the country presented to them.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results and observations made from the presentations of the Låna en Nordbo programme it can be concluded that the programme is a great first touch point of other cultures, for the students who does not have frequent contact with other cultures than the Finnish in their day to day lives. The programme brings an authenticity with it, as it is a person from the Nordic country in focus that is presenting about their culture to the students. This gives the students the opportunity to learn in depth about the new culture, language and country, as well as meeting a person from the country. Låna en Nordbo is complimenting the national curriculum of primary and secondary education in Finland's objectives well, as the aim is for the students to be able to relate to and communicate effectively with other cultures,

and critically view their own culture in relation to these. Through interaction with the programme the students get competencies in intercultural relations and communications with the country presented, which prepares them for future interactions with people from the culture.

It can also be argued that the teachers of the programme are impacted as well, as they develop competencies in communicating their culture to a room full of Finnish students who may not have had exposure to their culture or country before.

Other impacted influencers include the schools that invite the programme, as they help their students to gain knowledge about the country that will be presented to them. The teachers of the schools are, as a result, also seeing effects of the programme on their teaching, as many of them had prepared the students in advance of the visit and were able to learn new things about the country presented themselves.

However, where the programme was lacking was mainly in terms of the linguistics aspect. Many of students indicated that they did not understand everything, and in some cases nothing. Which meant that their classroom teacher⁵ and the Låna en Nordbo teacher had to translate what was said and asked into either Finnish or English. The suggestion made is for the Nordic Culture Point to consider using either Finnish or English in the presentations instead of Swedish or Scandinavian, to increase the level of understanding of the students. This suggestion will conflict with the current setup of the programme, which entails that the teacher of it should be able to speak in Swedish or Scandinavian and visit primarily classes where the students are studying Swedish. The reason for the suggestion of the language change is based on the belief in the impact and effects of the programme and that the full potential of the programme in some cases is not fulfilled with the Swedish language. The

⁵ The teacher from the school.

authenticity of having a teacher from another Nordic country will still remain, however them speaking in Finnish or English might make it easier for the students to relate to them and potentially ask more questions in the classroom.

In terms of the contents of the presentations, it was as a base good, however, not all the teachers managed to resonate their content with the students, and also the teaching methods were not always aligned to students. What should be a mandatory part of every presentation is to make parallels between the country and culture in focus with the Finnish culture and Finland. A few of the teachers made comparisons between their cultural traditions and Finnish traditions, and used statistics of population to compare city sizes between the country in focus and Finland. These elements were good because the students seemed to get a personal connection with the country presented to them, and understood the differences and similarities between their culture and the culture presented to them. This could be seen from the learning outcomes, where a majority of the students stated that they learned something new from the presentations and were interested in the country that they had a presentation about.

That said, the teachers need to have knowledge in how to relate to all students, so that the students do not drift off during the presentations, and the teachers also need to learn how to keep the attention and respect of the room they are in. This can be done through training before their visits. The training should not only capitalise on the presentation of their own culture, but also how to communicate to Finnish students. What this means is that the teachers should, before visiting the students, be able to view their own culture critically and analytically in contrast to the Finnish culture and convey why it is important to learn about, thereby be able to think like the students do about their culture and then make their

presentations based on that. Being able to this, will make the presentations more relatable for the students.

Another important element noticed during the presentations was that the student were using electronic devices in the classroom. The devices were both used to find information about the country presented to them, but also used as leisure activity when they lost interest in the presentation. Suggestions to combat the leisure usage in the presentations, include to incorporate the devices more, e.g. in an AR game that the students has to do as a part of the presentation on their smartphones or tablets. This will force the students to keep their attention to the presentation throughout the duration of it, which might increase the learning outcomes further as well as they will feel like playing and having fun with the country and culture.

What should also be taken into consideration is that the programme is having further challenges as it is a visiting programme, that is, not an integrated part of the normal curriculum of the school. This essentially means that the teachers do not have any relationship with the students they are presenting to in advance, and vice versa, which provides challenges in terms of knowing what the best style of presentation is for the group of students that they are talking to. Furthermore, as the programme and its content is not included in the schools' official curriculum or have effect the students' grades leaves more room for more relaxed attitudes in the classrooms, which can explain why some students were more leaning towards not paying attention in the classroom or very active in terms of answering questions that the teachers was asking from the class. A way to make the programme more relevant in the classrooms would be to officially include it as a part of the grades that the students get from the subject that it visits. This would demand that the schools are ready to make it a part of the

curriculum for the students in the grades that would have the visit, which at this point is an ambitious demand.

It leads to the question I started this thesis by asking; whether the Låna en Nordbo is making a difference in cultural understanding of the students. Based on the results and observations the answer is yes, to some extent. The programme has still got areas where it can be improved and optimised to become the influence it wants to be. More work needs to be done in order to make the countries presented in the programme relevant to the students. This is due to the fact that a many of the students did not think or care about the countries presented to them before their presentations. The work should, based on my observations, be done not only by The Nordic Culture Point but also by the schools who want the programme to visit them. Otherwise, the teachers of this great programme will keep encountering classrooms where the students do not care about their country, nor maintains to keep their interest or attention during the presentations.

Moreover, I also asked why the programme is important in the beginning. The importance is created through the interpersonal and intercultural interaction with the teacher of the programme who is able to share about their culture with a passion that only a native person from the country presented can do. This creates a bridge between the Finnish culture and the culture in focus in the presentations. A further relevance is created through making the culture and country have a personal impact and connection for the students. The students need to be able to relate to the country and culture and understand why they are important for them to learn about, which the teachers can clarify.

Låna en Nordbo essentially helps to prepare the students in the primary and secondary schools around Finland to engage not only with their cultures and countries, but opens up the

world outside in a powerful way by becoming the first touchpoint many of the students have with their country and culture.

This leads back to the group that my mother was representing; if no personal connection is established, it will not succeed. But, if a personal connection is made, the programme will be one of the most powerful lessons that the students will have during their primary or secondary education.

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