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Five suitable short stories for the Austrian EFL
classroom “

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Abstract

The aim of this diploma thesis is to demonstrate how five specific short stories can be used by teachers to support intercultural learning in the Austrian EFL classroom. Due to the growing importance of intercultural competence in an increasingly multicultural society, intercultural learning has been introduced as a guiding principle in the national curricula of all Austrian schools.

In order to supply teachers with relevant background information on intercultural learning as a new paradigm in foreign language education, the first chapter will focus on the main concepts of this approach. It will provide a clear definition of intercultural competence, explain general principles and practices for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective and moreover describe the legal framework for intercultural learning in Austrian schools. The second chapter focuses on the role literature can play in developing intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Despite current trends towards more standardised language teaching and assessment in Austrian schools, literature remains a valuable resource that can significantly contribute to the learners' linguistic development as well as to their intercultural understanding. This chapter will offer teachers useful practical guidelines with regard to selecting suitable reading material and effective tasks for intercultural learning and point out issues they need to be cautious about.

By analysing five specific short stories with regard to their individual potential for fostering intercultural competence, this thesis seeks to provide teachers with practical examples of how to realise intercultural learning through literature in the EFL classroom. The first part of the analysis of each story centres on cultural aspects that are relevant for intercultural learning in order to clarify how students can develop intercultural competence by reading the literary text. The second part of the analysis will investigate the individual story's potential for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective. This thesis will not only provide clear instructions with regard to the story's practical use in the classroom, but also supply teachers with teaching material.

In general, the analysis of the individual short stories' potentials for fostering intercultural competence has shown that the success of this approach depends not merely on the literary texts, but primarily on the way they are dealt with in the EFL classroom. While literary texts can provide valuable insights into issues which are relevant for developing intercultural awareness, teachers need to set effective tasks in order to realise their full potential.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays students in the Austrian EFL classroom belong to a new generation of global citizens. Technological innovations, such as computers and the internet, have had an enormous impact on global communication and in turn virtual contact between people from different national and cultural backgrounds has intensified dramatically (Bean et al. 251). Due to globalisation and extensive migration, Austria's society has also become increasingly multicultural and young adults come into contact with different aspects of other cultures on a daily basis. As a consequence of the growing importance of intercultural competence, intercultural learning has been introduced as a guiding principle in the national curricula of all Austrian schools. In general, intercultural learning aims at promoting mutual understanding, recognising cultural differences and similarities and reducing prejudices (Unterrichtsprinzip Interkulturelles Lernen).

While the aims of intercultural learning are clearly stated in the national curricula, there is no information with regard to its actual realisation in the classroom. Thus teaching from an intercultural perspective can present a considerable challenge for teachers if they are not familiar with this approach to language teaching. In order to be able to successfully foster intercultural competence in the EFL classroom, teachers need general theoretical background knowledge as well as clear guidelines with regard to suitable resources and effective tasks. As literature can be considered an especially valuable resource for intercultural learning, this thesis will centre on its use in the foreign language classroom. The aim of this thesis, then, is to demonstrate how five specific short stories can be used by teachers to support intercultural learning in the Austrian EFL classroom.

The short stories I have selected for my analysis are all particularly suitable for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective in the Austrian EFL classroom, for various reasons. Firstly, all stories deal with issues whose understanding is relevant for intercultural learning, such as experiences of migration, cultural misunderstandings or the search for cultural identity. On the other hand the literary texts portray different cultures and thus mirror not

only the great cultural diversity existing within Anglophone societies, but allow teachers insights into how different cultural issues can be addressed in the classroom. As most of the stories either contain autobiographical information or are based on the writers' personal experiences, the authors have created realistic plot lines and characters the readers can empathise with. Moreover, the stories all feature protagonists who are young adults, thus students can more easily identify with their problems and struggles.

In order to supply teachers with relevant background information on intercultural learning as a new paradigm in foreign language education, the first chapter will focus on the main concepts of this approach. I will provide a clear definition of intercultural competence, explain general principles and practices for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective and moreover describe the legal framework for intercultural learning in Austrian schools.

The second chapter focuses on the role literature can play in developing intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Firstly, I will argue why reading literary texts is important for learners of a foreign language and thus should be part of their education. Despite current trends towards more standardised language teaching and assessment in Austrian schools, literature remains a valuable resource that can significantly contribute to the learners' linguistic development as well as to their intercultural understanding. Secondly, I will analyse why literature can be regarded as an especially useful tool for supporting the development of intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. To better understand foreign cultures, learners need to distance themselves from their own positions and accept other viewpoints. Learners can experience different value systems and perspectives when reading foreign literature. The third section will discuss reader-response theory with regard to intercultural learning through literature. Reader-response theory offers valuable insights into how literary understanding is actively constructed by the reader throughout the reading process and highlights how the reader's own culture influences his or her interpretation of a literary text. By introducing Rosenblatt's concept of aesthetic reading to the EFL classroom, teachers can encourage learners to

become aware of personal feelings, thoughts and ideas that affect their understanding of foreign literature. This will make the reading experience particularly valuable for intercultural learning. Finally, the last section of this chapter will investigate how literature can be used in practice to foster intercultural learning in the EFL classroom. I will seek to provide teachers with useful practical guidelines with regard to selecting suitable reading material and effective tasks for intercultural learning and point out issues they need to be cautious about.

While the first two chapters of this thesis will provide an extensive theoretical background on teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective, the following chapter will demonstrate how teachers can put the theory into practice. By analysing five specific short stories with regard to their individual potential for fostering intercultural competence, this thesis seeks to provide teachers with practical examples of how to realise intercultural learning through literature in the EFL classroom.

While each story will be analysed separately, the analysis of all stories follows the same structure. First of all I will describe the background of the author as all of the stories include either autobiographical information or are based on the writer's personal experiences. The first part of the analysis of each story centres on cultural aspects that are relevant for intercultural learning in order to clarify how students can develop intercultural competence by reading the literary text. The second part of the analysis will investigate the individual story's potential for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective. This thesis will not only provide clear instructions with regard to the story's practical use in the classroom, but also supply teachers with teaching material. As the worksheets are all intended for actual classroom use, citation practice was adapted so as to render these worksheets readable for learners. Instead of quotation marks and the parenthetical citation used elsewhere in the thesis, which would disturb the learners' flow of reading, a list of works from which I compiled these teaching materials is added at the end of the page of a worksheet together with information about the sources of pictures.

2. Intercultural learning as a new paradigm in foreign language education

In the twenty-first century foreign language education has undergone a significant development in order to meet the new challenge of living in an increasingly globalised world. As people today come constantly into contact with other languages and cultures, demands on foreign language learning and teaching have fundamentally changed. English has become a lingua franca, which is used for communication by people all over the world. Thus foreign language education has started to focus primarily on developing communicative language competence. However, successful communication between speakers with different cultural backgrounds requires more than good language skills. Besides communicative competence, intercultural competence has become a major aim of language teaching and intercultural learning has been introduced as a new paradigm in foreign language education. In order to understand an intercultural approach to foreign language teaching it is important to first explain the main concepts within this perspective.

2.1. Defining intercultural competence

Learning a foreign language always involves learning about the culture of the community in which the target language is spoken (Jiang 328). The cultural context in which a language is used for communication has a considerable impact on the language itself. Members of a culture create local meanings by giving specific words and expressions additional connotations, which might deviate from standard use. Depending on the community of speakers certain meanings of language can be favoured if they are more relevant to their shared purpose or history (Liddicoat and Scarino 26). As language not only reflects culture, but is at the same time influenced and shaped by it, language and culture are inseparable (Jiang 328).

Although defining culture is complex, it is absolutely necessary when adopting an intercultural approach to language learning. Culture can be viewed as particular national characteristics which are defined by the people who live

within the borders of a country. Such a view of culture implies that boundaries between cultures are clear-cut and that its representations are timeless and static (Liddicoat and Scarino 20). The existence of cultural diversity within nation states is disregarded and culture is reduced to an undifferentiated, stereotypical and thus unrealistic understanding (Liddicoat and Scarino 18). "This view of culture treats cultural learning as learning about history, geography and institutions of country of the target language. Cultural competence comes to be viewed as a body of knowledge about the country." (Liddicoat and Scarino 19). For a long time this view dominated foreign language education and thus influenced intercultural learning in the EFL classroom.

Culture can also be described in terms of societal norms and cultural practices. Within this view, culture is seen as a system of shared values, customs and meanings which allows members of a culture to collectively make sense of experiences and communicate and interact in a meaningful way (Liddicoat and Scarino 19-21). "Within this paradigm cultural competence is defined as knowing about what people from a given cultural group are likely to do and understanding the cultural values placed upon certain ways of acting or upon certain beliefs" (Liddicoat and Scarino 19). These practices and norms are dynamic as they are actively created in interaction by members of a culture and are thus subject to change over time.

In general, cultures today can no longer be regarded as completely separate or independent entities (Doff and Schulze-Engler 1). Due to globalisation the world has become increasingly interconnected and national borders have lost their importance. Technological progress has simplified communication across the world and mass-migration has led to a great extent of cultural exchange. As a consequence, a great number of people nowadays do not belong to one culture, but are influenced by various ones (Doff and Schulze-Engler 3). Said argues that:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. [...] Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness [...] (qtd. in Doff and Schulze-Engler 3).

When approaching foreign language teaching from an intercultural perspective, a broad definition of culture is required that encompasses different views. Culture must not be taught as a body of knowledge and rules which can be simply learned by students. Instead, learners need to understand culture as a “framework in which people live their lives, communicate and interpret shared meanings, and select possible actions to achieve goals” (Liddicoat and Scarino 22). Learners need to become aware of how culture is influenced by various factors, such as time, place and individual identity, in order to understand complex cultural realities they encounter in their daily lives. To achieve such a deep understanding of culture teachers need to foster the development of intercultural competence in the EFL classroom (Liddicoat and Scarino 22-23). In general, intercultural competence encompasses the following (Doff and Schulze-Engler 1, Liddicoat and Scarino 23):

- understanding that a person’s social practices, values and beliefs are influenced by the cultures in which he or she participates
- striving for a better understanding of other cultures as well as one’s own
- becoming aware of one’s own cultural prejudices and presuppositions
- being tolerant, sensitive and open-minded with regard to other cultures
- valuing cultural diversity
- critically reflecting on one’s own cultural position

Due to the complexity of culture, developing intercultural competence in the EFL classroom is a challenging task for teachers. While a great variety of different models to language teaching from an intercultural perspective have been developed, teachers need to stick to certain basic principles in order to successfully promote intercultural competence.

2.2. Principles and practices for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective

Teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective differs in many ways from other approaches in foreign language education. While its major aim is the development of intercultural competence, other more general language competences need to be acquired simultaneously in the EFL classroom. Teachers might find it challenging to fulfil these demands in practice. In order to successfully adopt an intercultural approach to foreign language teaching, certain guiding principles must be followed. Although these principles are relevant for language learning in general, they are especially important for allowing meaningful learning and teaching from an intercultural perspective (Liddicoat and Scarino 56). Liddicoat and Scarino identify five different interrelated processes in intercultural learning which allow teachers to put the principles into practice (see Fig. 1, 59-61).

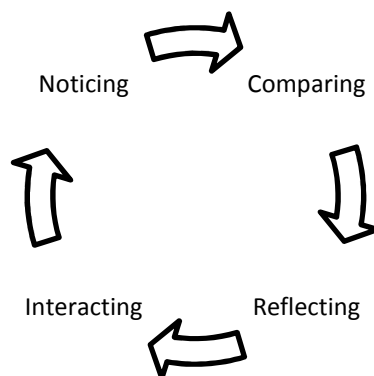


Fig.1. Interacting processes of intercultural learning (Liddicoat and Scarino 60)

First of all, teachers need to provide opportunities for learners to explore the relation between language and culture. As already discussed, neither language nor culture can be experience or acquired separately from one another as they are closely interconnected. While communicating with other speakers of the target language, learners actively create meaning which is always embedded in a cultural context. Learners need to become aware of how culture on the one hand influences themselves and on the other hand affects their perception of others (Liddicoat and Scarino 56). The process of noticing is a vital first step in developing intercultural competence. Learners need to notice cultural

similarities and differences first in order to be then able to make comparisons and critically reflect on them. Teachers can support students in this process by setting the right tasks or asking guiding questions. By comparing new cultural input to either their own culture, past experience or already existing cultural knowledge learners can make connections to their own real world. However, making comparisons can never be sufficient for promoting intercultural understanding, but it serves as a good starting point for critical reflection (Liddicoat and Scarino 60).

Reflection can be considered the most important process in intercultural learning as it “involves a large measure of decentering, of stepping outside one’s existing, culturally constructed framework of interpretation and seeing things from a new perspective” (Liddicoat and Scarino 58). In order to develop intercultural competence learners need to become aware of assumptions which underlie their thoughts and actions. As these assumptions about other cultures are based on past experiences or existing cultural knowledge, learners need to critically reflect on them in the light of the new cultural input received in the EFL classroom and in turn evaluate if they are still accurate and valid. In this process of conscious reflection learners view their own assumptions from a meta level and thus from a different perspective than usually. This allows learners insights into how they perceive other cultures and why. If learners realise in this process of reflection that their existing cultural assumptions have been unjust, they will be able to adjust them accordingly. In this way critical reflection can eliminate deep-rooted prejudices (McAllister et al. 370).

In general, learners need to take personal responsibility in intercultural learning. While teachers can create a positive setting for intercultural learning in the EFL classroom by encouraging reflection and critical discussions, every individual student is responsible for his or her progress. Learners constantly have to strive towards a better understanding of others as well as themselves in order to develop their intercultural competence. They need to be open-minded, tolerant and positive concerning cultural diversity (Liddicoat and Scarino 59).

2.3. The framework for intercultural learning in Austrian schools

Intercultural learning was introduced as a teaching principle in Austria in the 1990s. Since then it has been established in the curricula of all general secondary schools (AHS) as well as vocational secondary schools (BMHS) (Unterrichtsprinzip Interkulturelles Lernen). This didactic principle is not restricted to a specific school subject, but should be implemented effectively in all subjects in school. In general, intercultural learning aims at promoting mutual understanding, recognising cultural differences and similarities and reducing prejudices (Unterrichtsprinzip Interkulturelles Lernen). It is defined as a guiding principle in the Austrian national curriculum as follows:

Interkulturelles Lernen beschränkt sich nicht bloß darauf, andere Kulturen kennen zu lernen. Vielmehr geht es um das gemeinsame Lernen und das Begreifen, Erleben und Mitgestalten kultureller Werte. Aber es geht auch darum, Interesse und Neugier an kulturellen Unterschieden zu wecken, um nicht nur kulturelle Einheit, sondern auch Vielfalt als wertvoll erfahrbar zu machen. Durch die identitätsbildende Wirkung des Erfahrens von Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden der Kulturen, insbesondere in ihren alltäglichen Ausdrucksformen (Lebensgewohnheiten, Sprache, Brauchtum, Texte, Liedgut usw.), sind die Schülerinnen und Schüler zu Akzeptanz, Respekt und gegenseitiger Achtung zu führen (Verordnung über die Lehrpläne 5).

It is stressed in the curriculum that intercultural learning does not only imply learning about foreign cultures, but raising the learners' interest in cultural differences and similarities as well. By teaching students how cultures differ with regard to their language, habits, customs and traditions, mutual respect and tolerance should be encouraged. Instead of promoting cultural unity, intercultural learning should highlight how cultural diversity has enriched societies. In times of globalisation cultural openness is necessary for allowing peaceful social existence (Verordnung über die Lehrpläne 3).

With regard to teaching foreign languages, the curriculum for general secondary schools highlights the importance of developing intercultural competence through the right choice of relevant topics for the classroom. Foreign language education should develop the students' ability to deal with conflicts and provide them with education for peace. (AHS Lehrplan der Oberstufe für lebende Fremdsprachen 1).

Durch die Auswahl geeigneter fremdsprachlicher Themenstellungen ist die Weltoffenheit der Schülerinnen und Schüler sowie ihr Verständnis für gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge zu fördern. Konfliktfähigkeit, Problemlösungskompetenz und Friedenserziehung sind auch im Fremdsprachenunterricht als zentrale Lehr- und Lernziele zu betrachten (AHS Lehrplan der Oberstufe für lebende Fremdsprachen 1).

The curriculum for foreign languages in secondary schools explicitly states aims and objectives of intercultural learning. Openness towards other languages as well as understanding of different ways of life should be the main focus of teaching intercultural competence. Cultural stereotypes and clichés need to be discussed in the foreign language classroom and the learners' personal experiences critically examined (AHS Lehrplan der Oberstufe für lebende Fremdsprachen 1).

Durch interkulturelle Themenstellungen ist die Sensibilisierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler für die Sprachenvielfalt Europas und der Welt zu verstärken, Aufgeschlossenheit gegenüber Nachbarsprachen [...] zu fördern und insgesamt das Verständnis für andere Kulturen und Lebensweisen zu vertiefen. Die vorurteilsfreie Beleuchtung kultureller Stereotypen und Klischees, die bewusste Wahrnehmung von Gemeinsamkeiten und Verschiedenheiten sowie die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit eigenen Erfahrungen bzw. mit österreichischen Gegebenheiten sind dabei anzustreben (AHS Lehrplan Oberstufe für lebende Fremdsprachen 1).

Since the introduction of the new competence-oriented curricula (kompetenzorientierte Lehrpläne) in Austrian schools, the framework for foreign language education has been changed considerably. Instead of describing concrete topics which have to be dealt with in the foreign language classroom, the new curricula state certain linguistic competences pupils need to acquire at different stages of their education. These competences are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which has been developed by the Council of Europe. It provides a common framework for language teaching, learning and assessing across Europe and its influence has been significant all over the world (Byram and Hu 131).

The central aim of this framework is to support collaboration between educational institutions in different European countries. It provides a general

basis for developing and evaluating language syllabuses, assessment practices and teaching material (Byram and Hu 128). Moreover the CEFR includes detailed descriptions of linguistic competences learners need to acquire in order to be able to use the target language for communication. As it additionally assigns the various language skills to different levels of proficiency, the learners' individual progress can be measured and compared more easily (Council of Europe 1). These different levels of proficiency form the basis of the new competence-oriented curricula for foreign language learning in Austria. As a consequence teachers have more freedom with regard to the choice of topics that are dealt with in the foreign language classroom and can focus extensively on developing intercultural competence as long as language competence is fostered at the same time.

However, the CEFR has not only had a major impact on the Austrian national curriculum with regard to language proficiency, but has also highlighted the need for intercultural learning. As regards promoting intercultural competence, it is clearly stated that sociocultural knowledge as well as intercultural awareness need to be developed (Council of Europe 101). Sociocultural knowledge refers to knowledge of the society and culture in which the target language is spoken. To better understand others learners need information about cultural factors such as social conventions, values and beliefs, religious practices and everyday living (Council of Europe 102-103). Intercultural awareness, on the other hand, is defined as "knowledge, understanding and awareness of [...] similarities and distinctive differences between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community'" (Council of Europe 103). As explained earlier, this is also emphasised in the Austrian national curriculum for general secondary schools.

In general, the existing legal framework in Austrian schools provides good conditions for teaching and learning from an intercultural perspective. The importance of intercultural competence is highlighted by the Austrian national curricula as well as the CEFR. As language and culture are closely interconnected, foreign language education should play an essential role in developing intercultural awareness and understanding.

3. Literature and intercultural learning

Literature can play an essential role in developing intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Despite current trends towards more standardised language teaching and assessment in Austrian schools, literature remains a valuable resource that can significantly contribute to the learners' linguistic development as well as to their intercultural understanding. The following chapter will highlight why literature should be part of foreign language education in general and moreover investigate its potential for promoting intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. In addition this chapter will provide teachers with useful practical guidelines with regard to selecting suitable reading material and effective tasks for intercultural learning and point out issues they need to be cautious about.

3.1. Why should literature be read in the EFL classroom?

Due to recent developments in the Austrian school system towards a more standardised education, the importance of teaching literature in the foreign language classroom has been questioned. The introduction of a new Austrian national curriculum for teaching foreign languages that describes detailed language competences which need to be mastered at the standardised Matura exam put learners as well as teachers under new pressure. As the main aim of language lessons has become the students' preparation for the specific tasks in this exam, literature is in danger of losing its significance in foreign language learning in the Austrian EFL classroom. However, reading literary texts can contribute in many ways to the education of young learners and foreign language education should be about more than simply developing linguistic competence. Fostering critical thinking skills and an understanding of the world around us should play an equally important role in teaching and learning a foreign language.

First of all, using literature in the foreign language classroom can be significant for developing language proficiency in various ways. Thaler points out that basic linguistic skills, such as reading, writing and speaking, can be sharpened by

reading different samples of literary texts which present a variety of styles and text types (23). Learners who read extensively have a better feel for language and hence improve on using the foreign language in a more natural way.

According to the Austrian national curriculum for foreign languages, students should be encouraged to widen their vocabulary by reading literary texts extensively and independently (Lehrplan für Lebende Fremdsprachen, AHS Oberstufe 3). Building a wide-ranging vocabulary is essential in becoming proficient in a foreign language as errors of vocabulary frequently lead to misunderstandings or difficulties in communication (Hedge 111). Learners can memorise vocabulary more easily if new words are contextualised because part of their meaning depends on their context. Lists of isolated words are rapidly forgotten as they do not carry a message and thus bear little relation to psychological or linguistic reality. If learners are exposed to new vocabulary while reading literature, they encounter unknown words in a meaningful context which evokes their interest. If the meaning of an unfamiliar word is vital for understanding a text, the learners' motivation and involvement in learning it will be much higher and help them remember it (Hedge 120).

Reading literature in the foreign language classroom can also foster the learners' development of communicative language competence in various ways. The use of literature in the classroom has a long tradition in foreign language teaching, but its focus has shifted considerably with the development of new approaches to language learning. When communicative language teaching started to become popular in the 1970s due to a growing need for good communication skills in English all around the world, the aims and methodology as well as teaching materials and resources used in the EFL classroom changed tremendously (Richards 1). There was an increased demand for the use of authentic material in foreign language teaching in order to prepare students for understanding the target language in the real world (Hedge 67). Literature can be regarded as a valuable authentic resource as it "has been produced by a speaker of a language for other speakers of the same language" (Liddicoat and Scarino 95) and should therefore play a significant role in the EFL classroom.

The learning theory of communicative language teaching assumes that language learning is promoted by activities which involve real communication or tasks in which learners use language in a meaningful way (Richards and Rogers 161) and literary texts have become a valuable source for inspiring such language activities. Teachers can easily engage learners in creative language activities based on literary texts. Literature does not simply offer interesting topics learners can write, read and talk about, but also a great number of possibilities for creating meaningful tasks for learners of different proficiency levels (Byram and Hu 432). These text-based tasks should not simply check the students' comprehension of a text, but engage them interactively with each other, the text and the teacher. While expressing their own personal responses to literature learners have to make use of the target language (Hirvela 128). Hence, the learners' communicative language competence is fostered which is the paramount educational aim in foreign language learning according to the Austrian national curriculum (Lehrplan für Lebende Fremdsprachen, AHS Oberstufe 2).

Choosing reading material which sparks the learners' interest signifies not only a welcome change from usual language lessons, but can increase their motivation to participate actively in the EFL classroom as well (Thaler 24). As literary texts can always be interpreted in multiple ways depending amongst other factors on the reader's background knowledge, experiences and personality, the understanding of a text can differ from reader to reader and these different personal responses to a text provide opportunities for learners to argue their opinions and meaningfully interact with each other (Thaler 24). These conversations about different interpretations of a text can raise the learners' awareness of their personal knowledge, expectations and stereotypes that might unconsciously influence their reading of a text. Becoming conscious of these influences is an essential step in developing intercultural understanding (Byram and Hu 434).

Moreover, reading books can positively enrich learners on a personal level as new horizons might be opened up. Literature shows learners different perspectives on life, provides diverse role models, deals with personally

relevant issues or makes the reader ponder essential questions (Thaler 24). Therefore literature should play a significant role in a comprehensive humanistic education as highlighted in the Austrian national curriculum for foreign languages (Lehrplan für Lebende Fremdsprachen, AHS Oberstufe 2-3).

3.2. Why is literature a useful tool for developing intercultural competence?

Literary texts can contribute to the development of intercultural competence in numerous ways by providing valuable opportunities for readers to enhance their understanding of other cultures (Thaler 24). According to Thaler “[...] teaching foreign literature can arouse curiosity and openness towards the other culture, ask the readers to decentre from their own positions, force them to change perspectives, make them reflect on auto- and hetero-stereotypes, all of which may lead to a better understanding between different cultures” (70). In order to facilitate these processes, the study of a literary text in the classroom must move beyond its mere linguistic analysis and literary criticism towards its context, which can provide information for deeper reflection (Liddicoat and Scarino 96).

Literature frequently deals with topics whose understanding is relevant for developing intercultural competence and thus can serve as a useful starting point for intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom. Stories and novels can allow insights into the complexity of cultures and confront students with controversial issues such as cultural identity, migration, cross-cultural encounters, cultural conflicts and differences (Doff and Schulze-Engler 8). Critical discussions of these issues in the classroom can promote serious reflection and thus support the learners’ development of intercultural competence. By analysing particular events from literary texts, students can seek to find possible ways of how to resolve intercultural conflicts, learn why it is important to fight against racism and to show respect to members of other cultures or become aware of prejudices and stereotypes influencing their responses to a text. In order to extend the learners’ cultural knowledge teachers

need to encourage them to inform themselves about unknown aspects and acquire cultural background knowledge (Freitag-Hild 66).

Another main argument for using literary texts for developing intercultural competence is that readers can see the world from a different perspective. While today's young adults belong to a new generation of global citizens who come into contact with different aspects of other cultures constantly in their daily lives, many of them never critically think about global issues or the lives of people from other cultural backgrounds. They lack intercultural understanding as they view the world only from their own positions and thus cannot empathise with the situation of others. However, reading literary texts enables learners to see the world from a point of view that might differ from their own. Readers take over the perspectives of fictional characters and explore the characters' personal thoughts, feelings and worries as well as their cultural values and attitudes (Freitag-Hild 66).

In order to be able to change position while reading, first of all students need to learn to distinguish between different perspectives as well as to coordinate and negotiate between different viewpoints. They must dissociate themselves from their own cultural norms and values and question their existing opinions (Freitag-Hild 68). If learners are forced to de-centre from their own positions, they might become aware of how their personal perception of a foreign culture is influenced by their own culture and prevailing stereotypes (Goncalves Matos 124). While adopting a fictional character's perspective the reader can learn even more about an individual's intimate emotions and experiences than in personal encounters and comprehend what might appear meaningless or inferior from an outer perspective (Byram and Hu 442). While reading a literary text, readers can vicariously experience somebody else's life which is impossible in reality. Thus seeing the world through the eyes of others helps learners to develop empathy and understanding for different ways of behaviour and other cultures, which hopefully leads to a more open-minded and tolerant attitude towards others (Freitag-Hild 66).

To better understand why literature is especially useful for intercultural learning, we need to investigate its effects on the reader in even more detail. One major difference between texts whose primary purpose is to inform the reader and stories or novels is the readers' response to the different texts. Articles or essays mostly convey important factual information in a well-structured and straightforward way, whereas literary texts tell the stories of individual characters, their lives and struggles. Readers react differently to the matter-of-fact coverage of global problems in informative texts, which make problems seem more distant and abstract than in literature, which deals with these issues in a more personal way. According to Kramsch "literature's ability to represent the particular voice of a writer among the many voices of his or her community and thus to appeal to the particular in the reader" is the main argument for using literary texts in the EFL classroom (130). The portrayal of individual fates in stories helps learners to understand seemingly remote issues, such as migration or intercultural differences, better. Literature can break down large, complex problems into smaller, understandable and more individualised ones readers can more easily relate to.

Readers of literary texts empathise with individual characters because they see the world through their eyes. For example, if students read a story about the life of an immigrant, they might respond completely differently than to a graph showing immigration numbers. Hence, reading literature in the foreign language classroom that fosters intercultural understanding helps learners to become more empathic and sensitive.

In order to fully realise the potential of literary texts for intercultural learning, teachers need to select books or stories that arouse the students' emotions, spark their interest and thus stick in their minds. It is especially for younger learners more engaging to read an exciting story than to get information from a textbook or a lecture by the teacher. If learners enjoy reading texts that are relevant for intercultural learning, the learning output will be even higher. To raise the learners' curiosity and openness towards other cultures is an essential prerequisite for fostering intercultural awareness. Learners who are not actively and willingly engaged in the learning process will never acquire real intercultural

competence. As I have already argued, reading literature is hence a useful means of increasing the learners' motivation to participate in the EFL classroom.

3.3. Reader-response theory and intercultural learning

To comprehend why different readers might interpret the same work of literature differently, we need to investigate which factors influence the readers' interpretation of a text. Reader-response theory offers valuable insights into how literary understanding is actively constructed by the reader throughout the reading process. Instead of focusing only on the author and his or her text, Rosenblatt highlights the active role of the reader in the process of constructing meaning (23). In order to make sense of a literary text, the reader must actively use his or her own past experiences as well as background knowledge about the world (Rosenblatt 38). As the learner's understanding of a text is *inter alia* shaped by his or her expectations, knowledge, values and language ability, the individual interpretation and response to a text always reflects the reader's identity (Hirvela 130).

While Rosenblatt does not explicitly comment on the influence of culture on the reader's interpretation of literary texts, more recent studies have highlighted the importance of considering cultural influences on the reader (Brooks and Browne 2012). Readers are influenced on the one hand by their own culture and on the other hand by cultural features embedded in literary texts, such as themes, depictions of ethnic groups and cultural practices or distinct linguistic styles (Brooks and Browne 77).

To illustrate how culture is mediated between the reader and a literary text Brooks and Browne have developed a culturally situated reader-response model (see Fig.2). By analysing the personal responses of young adult readers to historical African-American novels, they found out that readers assume different cultural positions during the reading process. The reader's most dominant perspective, called "homeplace position", is unique as it depends on

his or her sense of self and identity as well as on influences from other supporting cultural positions. The reader's cultural position is shaped by his or her belonging to a specific family, peer group, community and ethnic group (Brooks and Browne 78). "Collectively, these positions represent multilayered aspects of one's culture and the multitude of practices inherent within it" (Brooks and Browne 79). These different cultural positions all have a vital impact on the reader's responses to a literary text.

Meanwhile the representation of different cultural aspects in literary texts affects which cultural position the reader assumes during the reading process (Brooks and Browne 83). Different features and passages from multicultural narratives call forth different types of reader-responses by different readers. For example, a story whose main theme is racism will be viewed from a completely different ethnic group position by an African-American reader than by a white Anglo-Saxon one. However, even readers who belong to the same ethnic group might actually respond differently to a literary text due to diverse family or community positions. The actual response to a literary text always depends on the reader as well as the story and needs to be considered with regard to its context.

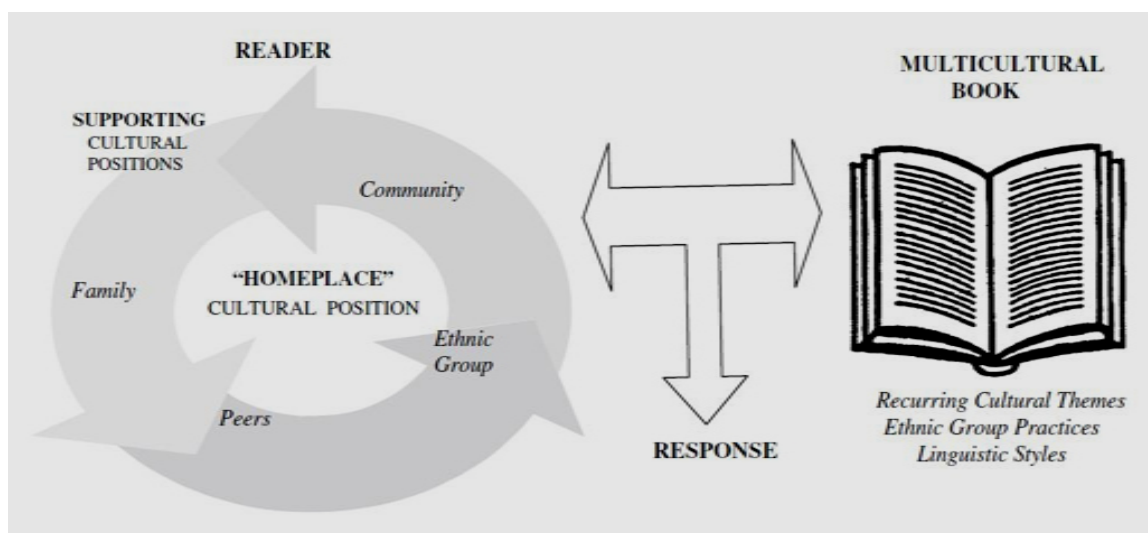


Fig. 2: A culturally situated reader-response model (Brooks and Browne 78)

With regard to intercultural learning through literature, teachers can gain valuable insights from this culturally situated reader-response model. Sipe

highlights that “it [is] important to contextualize children’s responses to literature and to seek to understand the ways in which a diversity of response from a diversity of cultures can enrich literary discussion and interpretation” (qtd. in Brooks and Browne 83). Teachers need to be aware of how culture affects, restricts and allows personal responses to literary texts if they want to make use of literature for developing intercultural awareness in the EFL classroom. Understanding that students’ interpretations are influenced by a range of cultural positions should lead towards a more open-minded attitude towards different reader-responses to multicultural literature.

3.3.1. Efferent and aesthetic reading

From the previous discussion, it can be seen that reader-response theory provides a valuable theoretical background for supporting intercultural learning through literature. While reading can foster intercultural awareness, the success of this approach will depend, amongst other factors, on the way learners read a literary text. Rosenblatt introduces two fundamentally different ways of reading literature, whose main distinction lie in the reader’s different focus of attention while reading. Efferent reading refers to the process of reading for a practical purpose, such as to gain knowledge from a text that will be useful afterwards, whereas aesthetic reading focuses on the reader’s personal reaction to literature during the actual reading process (Rosenblatt 24). During aesthetic reading the reader pays attention not only to the meaning of the text, but also to associations, emotions and ideas that the text arouses in him or her. Aesthetic reading fosters a personal response of the reader to the text, which goes beyond its mere understanding (Rosenblatt 25).

If learners concentrate not only on understanding the meaning of a text, but also take into account personal feelings, thoughts and ideas evoked by the text, the reading experience will be particularly valuable for intercultural learning. As discussed earlier, the intercultural awareness of learners can increase if they become aware of their own cultural values and norms as well as unconscious stereotypes or prejudices that might influence their understanding of a text. According to Goncalves Matos language activities which support aesthetic

reading are especially relevant for developing intercultural understanding (109). While reading a literary text aesthetically, “the reader participates in his secondary world while at the same time observes his/her involvement. The reflective element connecting the reader and the text encourages the adoption of different points of view and broadens the readers’ horizons” (Goncalves Matos 109). Thus aesthetic reading encourages a deeper reflection of how one’s own culture affects one’s perception of a foreign culture (Goncalves Matos 109).

As the same literary text can be read either in an aesthetic or efferent way by the same reader (Rosenblatt 25), the teacher can influence which form of reading the learners will adopt by setting the tasks accordingly. The purpose of reading needs to be clear for learners from the beginning and determines not only the strategies learners use in approaching a text, but also what they will gain from reading it. However, learners tend to focus especially on understanding the meaning of a text if they struggle with the target language due to a lack of linguistic ability. Reading literature in the EFL classroom often resembles a long comprehension exercise in which students gather information they can make use of afterwards. Hence, the reader’s personal experience during the reading process is frequently disregarded and literature is treated as a source of information instead (Carlisle 13). It is the teacher’s responsibility to introduce learners to the widely unknown concept of aesthetic reading. The choice of reading material that suits the learners’ language ability as well as the selection of effective tasks that encourage personal reader-responses play a significant role in this learning process. Teaching literature as an aesthetic experience can be a valuable approach to raising intercultural awareness in the EFL classroom.

3.4. Teaching intercultural competence through literature

So far this thesis has provided an extensive theoretical background to intercultural learning through literature. However, essential questions concerning its actual realisation in the EFL classroom still need to be answered. In order to successfully foster intercultural competence in the EFL classroom, teachers need to carefully select suitable reading material as well as effective tasks. As intercultural learning involves the discussion of controversial issues, teachers need to be aware of possible dangers and limitations of this teaching approach. The following sections will provide teachers with helpful guidelines for teaching intercultural learning through literature.

As explained earlier, one major aim of intercultural learning is to lead learners towards a better understanding of foreign cultures. Although literary text can be extremely useful in this process, learners might need additional cultural knowledge in order to understand unfamiliar customs and behaviour depicted in the texts. Otherwise learners might have difficulties in making sense of what they read or draw wrong conclusions from the texts (Byram and Hu 441). There is no general guideline to how much cultural background knowledge needs to be provided by the teacher as this depends primarily on the group of learners as well as on the text itself.

However, experts warn against overestimating the importance of providing cultural background knowledge before reading a literary text (Byram and Hu 441). As literary texts are open to different interpretations depending to a large extent on the reader's knowledge, it can be an enriching experience for students to discuss their different reactions to a text and pursue how specific background knowledge about a foreign culture changes these interpretations (Byram and Hu 442). Giving the learners too much information about the text before they have actually read it, might hinder meaningful interaction in the classroom and reduce the students' interest in the text. "Teachers must decide what cultural knowledge their students need for a fruitful interaction with the text. Therefore we should not play off literary understanding and cultural

knowledge against each other but should explore how they can supplement one another" (Byram and Hu 442).

3.4.1. The selection of suitable reading material

The right choice of reading material for the classroom is essential in fostering intercultural learning through literature. With reference to an Australian award for children's literature Byram and Hu identify general criteria for multicultural texts that can be considered as relevant for enhancing intercultural awareness (439). It is stated that literary texts should "include insights into a non-Anglo culture [...], present a comparison/contrast of an Anglo culture with another, depict an active, conscious integration of cultures, include insights into racism or clash of cultures, [...] issues of social justice/ social harmony or immigration experience/ loneliness/ alienation" (439).

By selecting a broad range of reading material that portrays not only the dominant cultures of the Anglophone countries Great Britain and the United States but also the lives of marginalised or minority groups, teachers can make learners aware of the great diversity existing within the English-speaking world. Due to Great Britain's colonial past and the more recent development of English as a lingua franca, the language is used to communicate by a growing number of people all over the world. In order to support authenticity in the classroom it is necessary to take this development into account by introducing literary texts that use different varieties of English (Doff and Schulze-Engler 8).

The New English Literatures, comprising Asian, African, Caribbean, Oceanian, and Canadian Anglophone literatures, provide a useful source of literary texts suitable for intercultural learning (Doff and Schulze-Engler 4). An essential advantage of using these new literatures in English is that students get to know the viewpoints and struggles of people who do not belong to the dominant Anglophone culture. Authors that are members of marginalised or oppressed minority groups or are migrants themselves can use literature as a means of expressing their feelings, worries and opinions. They are given a voice in the text (Byram and Hu 438). By using their own cultural background and personal

experiences of migration and conflicts these authors create realistic plot lines and characters that the readers can empathize with.

Foreign language education should focus on true-to-life topics that are somehow related to the learners' world and that students can identify with. One didactic principle stated in the Austrian national curriculum is to use material in the foreign language classroom that is oriented towards the learners' real world (Lehrplan für Lebende Fremdsprachen, AHS Oberstufe 4). Thaler points out that literature which depicts the lives of young adults from other cultures is especially valuable for the EFL classroom as students can more easily feel sympathy with these characters and their problems (71). Postcolonial and minority young adult literature is an especially valuable source for literary texts that have the power to foster intercultural awareness (Thaler 71).

3.4.2. Effective tasks for intercultural learning through literature

In order to foster intercultural learning in the EFL classroom the reading process needs to be guided by tasks that "facilitate negotiation of meaning between the foreign culture represented in the text and the learners' own culture" (qtd. in Thaler 71). There is a great variety of different tasks and language activities which are useful for this purpose. However, drama is an underestimated resource for supporting intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom. In our case a broad definition of drama needs to be provided which encompasses not only dramatic texts in the form of plays, but also acting in general as well as related techniques (Cunico 23). Drama activities can be regarded as particularly effective due to various reasons.

Firstly, drama encourages the learners' emotional involvement in the process of making sense of literature, which in turn can enhance intercultural understanding (Byram and Fleming 145). Drama techniques can be used to simulate real-life situations or relevant scenes from a literary text in the classroom and thus engage learners actively in the process of understanding their own culture as well as other cultures (Byram and Fleming 143). Role-play, still images, re-telling a story from a different point of view or verbalizing the

thoughts of characters are effective teaching methods that can be implemented easily in the EFL classroom (Cunico 23). Instead of merely changing their perspective while reading, students actively take over the roles of fictional characters while acting out a scene from a text and thereby distance themselves from their own position. They are stimulated to explore cultural meaning from the characters' viewpoints, learning to see from both inner and outer perspective (Cunico 25). This might lead to an even deeper reflection on the impersonated characters' experiences, feelings or sorrows and thus to more empathy on the part of the learners. Byram and Fleming highlight that while drama appeals to the learners' emotions, it allows enough distance for critical reflection (143).

Drama as an art form works paradoxically by bringing participants closer to the subject through emotional engagement but at the same time preserving a distance by virtue of the fact that the context is make-believe. The actors in the drama can be likened to "participant observers" who are engaged in the social world and yet distanced enough to be able to reflect on the products of that engagement (Byram and Fleming 143).

Thus drama techniques provide an ideal context for exploring underlying cultural values presented in literary texts in the EFL classroom, which is an essential step towards developing intercultural competence.

Secondly, drama can be especially valuable for promoting intercultural understanding as it offers learners opportunities to explore situations which would be impossible in real life. Drama creates a fictional world which allows learners to make experiences and discover things that could otherwise never happen (Fleming 149). "In practical terms that may mean freezing a moment in time, slowing the action down, replaying the action with different outcomes, juxtaposing thoughts with actual words spoken, repeating actions with different intonations, [...] working towards a fully-fledged performance and so on" (Fleming 149). The possibility of slowing down actions or changing their outcome is essential in teaching students ways of coping with difficult situations or resolving problems. In this way drama can be used as a method to help students understand the cultural content of literary texts and thus develop intercultural competence (Cunico 24).

Besides intercultural competence, language skills can also be fostered through the use of drama in the foreign language classroom. As learners are encouraged to use the target language spontaneously and more freely than in other guided language tasks, they might become more fluent and learn to speak with less restraint (Cunico 21). Drama techniques can further contribute to a positive group atmosphere as they bring variety to the lesson and most learners enjoy the welcome change from classroom routine (Byram and Fleming 148).

As explained in the previous chapter, it is clear that reader-response theory provides a valuable theoretical background for justifying intercultural learning through literature. However, as far as its practical implementation in the EFL classroom is concerned, teachers might need further instruction. With regard to teaching methods, teachers can choose from a wide range of tasks and activities that stimulate learners into producing personal responses to literature.

Reading logs are an especially effective tool for introducing the reader-response model to the EFL classroom (Carlisle 12). Keeping a reading log encourages learners to reflect seriously and more deeply on what they have read and thus teaches them to critically think about literature and to value their own responses. Instead of focussing merely on the literary text itself, readers learn to pay more attention to their own ideas and reactions to a text and to explore them more freely. If students simply read a literary text without further instruction, they will focus only on comprehending the plot. Reading logs, on the other hand, guide learners towards a more serious reflection of their own responses to a text. As explained earlier, the reader's understanding of a text is affected by past experiences, prevailing stereotypes as well as his or her culture and its values and practices. While these influences are often unconscious, keeping a reading log helps reveal them. Thus reading logs promote an aesthetic reading experience that moves beyond mere textual comprehension (Carlisle 12).

However, keeping a reading log can be challenging for students if they are not familiar with aesthetic reading. Teachers need to carefully support learners in

their development of the necessary competences. Clear instructions and guidelines for keeping a reading log are essential in order to ensure that learners can profit as much as possible from this classroom activity. While reading logs must in any case be written in the target language, students should enjoy more freedom with regard to the number or length of entries (Carlisle 15).

In order to discourage learners from merely summarising the plot, teachers should provide a list of questions which guide the learners during the reading process (see Fig. 3). These questions should be based on the four different responses to literature that occur while reading: anticipating/retrospecting, picturing, interacting and evaluating (qtd. in Carlisle 13). Learners should write down associations, ideas and memories that arise as a reaction to different events, characters or situations in the narrative. Readers might comment on thoughts and feelings they have after reading different parts of a story, reflect on striking ideas and moments in the story or make comparisons with their own lives. In addition, students should consciously think about what they have learned from the text, what has confused them and what they would like to know more about. As they immediately document their personal responses to the literary text while reading or shortly afterwards, initial reactions do not get lost, but are recorded for later classroom discussion (Carlisle 14). These classroom discussions of reader-responses play a significant role in the development of intercultural awareness.



Keeping a reading log



Make a record of feelings, associations, ideas, images, etc. that are evoked while you are reading the story. This record should contain answers to the following questions:

What are your thoughts after reading the first part of the story? How do you feel after finishing it? Did you enjoy reading the story? Why? Why not?

What are your favourite scenes? Are there any interesting quotes or lines in the story which caught your attention? Write them down and explain why you especially liked these passages.

Are you confused about what happened or did not happen in the narrative? Did you find any events or characters difficult to understand? Is there anything the author could have changed to make the story clearer?

Does the story leave you with open questions? Write down questions you would like to ask particular characters or the author.

Which character did you like best? Is there a character you did not like? Why? Does one of the characters remind you of someone you know?

Would you like to be a character from the story? What would you change about the character, if you could?

Which cultures are portrayed in the story? How are they portrayed? Do you have any personal experiences with these cultures or people who belong to them?

What kind of emotions (laughter, tears, smiles, anger) did the story arouse?

Is the story somehow related to your own life? Does the story remind you of an event that happened to you or someone you know?

Have you changed after reading the story? Could you learn anything about life in general from reading the story?

Is there an idea in the story that makes you stop and critically reflect on your own life? Explain why this idea makes you think.

Who else should be encouraged to read this story? Should anyone not read it? Why?

SOURCES: text adapted from: http://classiclit.about.com/od/forstudents/ht/aa_readinglog.htm, 15 Mar 2015
clipart left: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/370350769329365953/>, 15 Mar 2015
clipart right: <http://gallimaufry.typepad.com/.a/6a014e5fb9e8aa970c016764212744970b-pi>, 15 Mar 2015

Fig. 3: Keeping a reading log – classroom material

3.4.3. Dangers and limitations - what teachers need to be cautious about

While literary texts can contribute enormously to intercultural understanding, there are certain objections and limitations teachers need to be aware of. First of all, teachers have to keep in mind that students of a foreign language might have difficulties in understanding a text due to a lack of linguistic abilities. If teachers want to develop their students' intercultural awareness, they need to provide stories or novels that are suitable for the learners' language competence. If readers struggle with making sense of the text, they will not be able to reflect on its intercultural message.

As explained earlier, literature can consciously raise the readers' awareness of intercultural issues and provide information about other cultures. However, critics point out that the use of literature as a source of information about a foreign culture can be problematic if learners consider the behaviour or actions of fictional characters in a text to be representative of the foreign culture in general (Byram and Hu 438). The African author Chimamanda Adichie warns in her speech "The Danger of a Single Story" of the influence single books and stories can have especially on the minds of young readers. Reading can open up new worlds to children and young adults, but it can also confirm stereotypes and prejudices.

Cultural environments and people from foreign countries must not be reduced to their portrayal in one single literary text, allowing it to construct cultural identity in the mind of the reader. Adichie draws our attention to the importance of power relations involved in this issue.

[...] to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become. It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. [...] How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person (Adichie 2009 9:30-10:00).

In the course of their studies as well as in their everyday lives, learners have come across a great number of depictions of the dominant Anglophone cultures

due to their economic and cultural power, whereas their knowledge about minority communities or other less frequently depicted cultures might be only superficial. This lack of knowledge might lead to a false appraisal of information in a literary text. For example, when an American student expressed his dismay with Nigerian men who he thought were all physical abusers like a male character in her novel, Adichie replied that she had recently read the novel *American Psycho*, nevertheless she did not believe that all American males were serial killers (Adichie 2009: 10:51-10:28). Instead of drawing hasty conclusions from fictional texts, students need to develop critical reading skills. Readers need to be aware of the fact that “texts are constructed in certain ways by writers in order to shape the readers’ perception towards the underlying ideology of the text” (Hedge 197). Students need to learn to identify this underlying morality of a text and critically analyse its representation of cultural values (Hedge 197).

One essential aim of intercultural learning is to show learners that diversity exists within all cultures and people, thus they can never be entirely depicted in a single literary text. Advocates of a transcultural approach to foreign language learning (see Delanoy 2006, Doff and Schulze-Engler 2011, Freitag-Hild 2011) stress that cultures today are no longer homogenous and distinct units within nation states, but characterised by inner differentiation, interconnection with other cultures and hybridisation (Freitag-Hild 69). In order to gain a more realistic insight into foreign cultures and to sensitise students for the existence of complex cultural identities, learners need to encounter a great variety of cultural perspectives in the classroom (Freitag-Hild 69).

We must also take into consideration that a great number of people have multicultural identities, thus they cannot be reduced to one single collective identity such as English, Mexican or Indian. It is necessary to draw attention to the significant impact of a person’s personal history and experiences which influences his or her identity (Byram and Hu 440). Literary texts that focus merely on highlighting stereotypical representations of “the other”, such as the starving African or the poor Mexican immigrant, can never be sufficient for developing true intercultural understanding. According to Adichie “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are

untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (13:00- 13:20).

In order to develop intercultural competence a "balance of stories" presenting intercultural issues from different perspectives is required in the classroom. Teachers need to carefully select reading material that does not propagate stereotypes and choose effective tasks that raise the learners' critical awareness. Additional cultural or historical background knowledge can be extremely useful in helping the readers to put information from literary texts into the proper perspective (Byram and Hu 438).

4. Analysis of selected short stories for the EFL classroom

This chapter explores different ways in which short stories can be used for promoting intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. Short stories are an especially valuable resource for foreign language teaching as their brevity allows teachers to integrate them flexibly into their lessons (Thaler 91). According to Thaler short stories can be regarded as a bridge between coursebook texts and longer works of literature (91). In general short stories are less complex than novels due to their mostly simple plotlines which include only few turning-points as well as a limited number of characters (Thaler 91). Nevertheless short stories have the power to spark the students' interest if they centre on topics which are relevant to their own lives. I have selected short stories whose moving portrayals of the lives of marginalised or minority groups, raise the learners' awareness of the great cultural diversity existing within the English-speaking world and thus broaden the students' horizons.

4.1. "They don't mean it" by Lensey Namioka

The short story "They don't mean it" was first published in 2007 as part of an anthology of stories about teenage immigrants and their problems in the United States. "They don't mean it" portrays the life of a Chinese family who has recently immigrated to the United States and tries to adjust to the American way of life. The family slowly assimilates to American culture in their everyday living and starts to follow local social conventions. However, Chinese customs, manners and traditions differ in many respects greatly from American ones, which causes various cultural misunderstandings. As the protagonist Mary needs to correct misinterpretations of her family's behaviour, she realises the importance of explaining Chinese manners to her American friends.

Lensey Namioka based the events in the story on her own personal experiences as an immigrant in the United States. She was born in Beijing in China and moved with her family to America after World War II (Gallo 93). The cultural misunderstandings she depicts in "They don't mean it" can be regarded as a reflection of the struggles she and her family had when they first

immigrated to America. She explores the life of the Chinese family from the point of view of the young adult daughter Mary, who has to solve different intercultural misunderstandings. It can be argued that the story contains to a certain extent autobiographical elements as Namioka was approximately as old as the story's protagonist at the time of her migration to the United States. Her depictions of different intercultural conflicts reflect the perspective of a young adult as they never go beyond Mary's capacity to take an active role in solving them.

4.1.1. Intercultural aspects in the story

The short story "They don't mean it" by Lensey Namioka portrays the life of a Chinese immigrant family who has recently moved to the United States. While the story vividly depicts how cultural differences can affect intercultural encounters and lead to misunderstandings, it also gives interesting information about Chinese culture as some of its customs, manners and traditions are portrayed in the narrative. The author focuses in her portrayal of American as well as Chinese culture on the comparison of different cultural practices and social conventions. Culture is presented as a system of shared values, customs and meanings which allows members of a culture to collectively make sense of experiences and to communicate and interact in a meaningful way.

"They don't mean it" provides the reader with interesting insights into Chinese culture. The Chinese family is portrayed as extremely hard-working and ambitious in their efforts to integrate into American society. Even though Mary is still a young girl she gives her best in order to fit into her new home. "I worked harder than anybody at doing the right thing" (Namioka 81). In comparison to life in the United States, life in China is viewed as harder and stricter. "Mother admitted that living in America for two years had made her soft, and she no longer felt like killing a fish with her own hands" (Namioka 82). The whole family seems to have a very close relationship and the children hold their parents in great respect. For instance, when Kim criticises Mary's parents, she immediately defends them as she is sure of their affection.

“We’re not hurt if we hear our parents say bad things about us, since we know they’re only doing it because it is good manners. We know perfectly well that they don’t mean it. But if they say my brother has a terrible ear, they’d really be telling the truth. So they don’t say anything, because they would hurt his feelings” (Namioka 89).

While modesty and good manners are extremely important for the Chinese family, they still face difficulties in the United States when their behaviour differs from the local social conventions.

In her depiction of Chinese culture Namioka also highlights the importance of traditions. Even though Mary and her family have assimilated into the local community and adopted its accepted ways of behaviour in their everyday living, they still cherish Chinese customs and traditions as well. On Chinese New Year they invite their American friends for dinner in order to celebrate together. The detailed descriptions of the Chinese New Year festival and their preparation in the story allow the reader to gain inside knowledge of Chinese culture. The reader learns why Chinese New Year does not take place on the same day every year and how it is traditionally celebrated. Eating special food is an essential part of the festivities as certain dishes are believed to bring good luck for the whole year. For instance, a salad including ten different vegetables is supposed to promote health, whereas noodles represent long life (Namioka 82-83). These symbolic meanings of Chinese New Year’s specialities are explicitly explained in the story in order to provide the reader with cultural background information.

In order to adjust to American ways, the family members start to change their behaviour. “When we first came to the United States, we had a hard time getting used to the different customs, but we gradually learned how things were done” (Namioka 80). For example, “mother stopped complimenting people here on how old and fat they looked. She learned that Americans thought being old was pitiful, and that being slender was beautiful” (Namioka 81). In addition, Mary and her family learn American table manners and thus stop slurping when they eat soup. They also change their eating habits. Instead of sandwiches filled with bean sprouts, Mary’s brother now eats peanut butter sandwiches like the other children at school. The family has started to celebrate American holidays

and at the Chinese New Year's dinner Mary feels obliged to offer dessert although this is no traditional Chinese custom. Mary and her family know that developing good language proficiency is a vital step of cultural integration. Thus Mary wants to increase her language skills by learning typical English expressions, whereas her father works hard in order to improve his English pronunciation.

In general, the Chinese family's primary aim is to become an accepted part of the local community. Mary and her family can be considered a perfect example of acculturation as they start to gradually abandon their own cultural practices in the process of becoming American. Mary even adopts an American name after she has immigrated to the United States in order to be more readily accepted by her peers. As a person's name is a vital part of her cultural identity, this change of name expresses her eagerness to become part of a different culture.

The Chinese family as well as their American friends both foster a close relationship and promote intercultural understanding. For example, they invite each other to different cultural festivities and are interested in getting to know the others' traditions and customs. "The guests thanked us for inviting them and showing them what a real Chinese dinner was like" (Namioka 86). However, different social conventions lead to cultural misunderstandings in the story. When Mrs. O'Meara praises Mary's good work in slicing the vegetables for the salad, her mother contradicts her. "The girls did the cutting, and I'm sorry they did such a terrible job" (Namioka 86). Mary's father reacts similarly when a friend compliments his wife's cooking skills "“Oh, no, she's not a good cook at all”, said Father. “You're just being polite”" (Namioka 86). Mary's friend Kim does not understand their reactions and is shocked by their pejorative replies. In order to solve this cultural misunderstanding Mary needs to explain her parents' behaviour to Kim. When discussing the issue, the girls realise that there is an essential difference in what is regarded as good manners in Chinese and American culture. While Americans consider only praising yourself as bragging, Chinese people feel the same if you praise your own family. "It is good manners if you contradict people when they compliment your children" (Namioka 88).

“They don’t mean it” provides an excellent example of how intercultural conflicts can be solved in a successful way and at the same time intercultural awareness can be fostered. First of all, both girls strive for a better understanding of the other’s culture as well as their own. This is an essential prerequisite for correcting intercultural misunderstandings and developing intercultural competence. Instead of simply condemning the behaviour of Mary’s parents Kim talks to her friend and wants to understand their reasons. Mary needs to critically reflect on her own culture first in order to be able to explain it to Kim.

“What Kim said made me thoughtful. I suddenly realised that whenever people said good things about us, my parents contradicted them and said how bad we were. We kids knew perfectly well that our parents didn’t mean it, so our feelings weren’t hurt in the least. It was just the way Chinese parents were supposed to talk” (Namioka 88).

By comparing their different understandings of bragging, the girls become aware of cultural differences and comprehend how a person’s behaviour and actions are influenced by the culture in which he or she participates. Mary’s explanation helps Kim to understand her perspective even though it differs from her own cultural position. In turn Kim is more open-minded with regard to Chinese culture. “I think Kim understood what I was driving at. She didn’t make a face when she heard my mother saying that the cookies Second Sister baked [...] were terrible” (Namioka 89). This shows the reader that a lack of cultural knowledge can easily lead to intercultural conflicts. If you understand other cultures better, you can be more tolerant. However, when Kim tries to act according to her newly gained cultural knowledge she makes a mistake as she did not know that young people must act differently than their elders (Namioka 92). This shows that understanding a foreign culture and its customs is a complex process which needs patience and time.

4.1.2. The story's potential for intercultural learning in the EFL classroom

“They don’t mean it” deals with topics whose understanding is particularly relevant for developing intercultural competence. Its depiction of the life of an immigrant family allows insights into the complexity of cultures and confronts learners with issues such as intercultural conflicts caused by cultural differences. The story does not merely present a comparison of an Anglophone culture with a non-Western one, but stresses the importance of intercultural understanding as well as a successful integration of immigrants into society.

The short story “They don’t mean it” can be regarded as especially suitable for the EFL classroom in Austrian secondary schools for various reasons. First of all, the portrayal of cultural differences in the story focuses on customs, traditions and social conventions, which are part of everyday living. Younger learners can easily understand these aspects of culture as they are related to their own world. Thus the learners’ personal experiences can provide a valuable starting point for comparisons, discussions and critical reflections in the classroom, which in turn foster intercultural competence. As the story is told from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant schoolgirl, young adults might even more easily identify with the protagonist and her struggles. While the story allows interesting insights into Chinese culture, no cultural background knowledge is needed for understanding the text. Unfamiliar Chinese customs and traditions are all explained in the story, which makes it easy for readers to follow the plotline and comprehend the characters’ behaviour.

Moreover, the author not only raises the readers’ awareness of how cultural differences can easily lead to intercultural misunderstandings, she also shows in her narrative how these cultural conflicts can be solved successfully. By analysing particular events from the story, students can seek to find possible ways of how to deal with cultural differences. As already explained, Mary and Kim provide an excellent example of how to increase one’s intercultural competence. They are both respectful of the other’s culture and strive for a better understanding of other cultural practices and customs. When they face a cultural misunderstanding, the girls act in an exemplary manner. Learners can

benefit from reading this story as it demonstrates how everybody can actively contribute to resolving intercultural issues and thus promote intercultural understanding.

In order to better understand people of a different culture it is essential to comprehend “what people from a given cultural group are likely to do and understanding the cultural values placed upon certain ways of acting or upon certain beliefs” (Liddicoat and Scarino 19). As already explained, the story “They don’t mean it” provides readers with interesting information about Chinese cultural traditions and customs. However, teachers need to be aware that students in Austrian schools might not have come into any close contact with Chinese culture yet. Thus this literary text might be their only source of information, which can be problematic if learners consider the behaviour or actions of fictional characters in the story to be representative of Chinese culture in general.

Instead of simply identifying binary oppositions between two cultures, intercultural learning needs to raise the learners’ awareness of “culture as an open and fluid cluster of different individual cultural practices” (Doff and Schulze-Engler 7). While comparisons of cultures can still serve as a good starting point for critical reflection, they can never be sufficient for promoting intercultural understanding. One essential aim of intercultural learning is to show learners that diversity exists within all cultures and people. In order to develop intercultural competence students need to learn that cultures are never homogenous.

By setting the right tasks, teachers need to foster this intercultural awareness in the EFL classroom. For example, the celebration of cultural festivals, such as New Year and Easter, play a significant role in the story. In order to raise the students’ consciousness of differences existing within a culture, learners can explore the differences between how they and their classmates celebrate New Year (see Fig. 4). Even though they might follow the same local traditions in some respect, they might act differently according to individual customs in their families. In its comparison of cultures, “They don’t mean it” focuses especially

on differences, whereas cultural similarities remain in the background. Therefore it makes sense to encourage learners to find a number of parallels between the cultures presented in the story and their own cultural traditions. For example, learners can compare how Mary and her family celebrate Chinese New Year to the way they usually celebrate New Year's Eve and try to find similarities (see Fig. 4). In this way students can realise how contemporary cultures are interlinked. In addition to intercultural learning, the topic of celebrating New Year's Eve is suitable for practicing the use of will future in the classroom. When writing down various New Year's resolutions, the learner's are encouraged to use this tense in a meaningful context (see Fig. 5).



Celebrating New Year's Eve



How do you celebrate New Year's Eve?

Answer the following questions. Then walk around, talk to your classmates and find somebody who celebrates New Year's Eve differently.

Question	Your answer	Classmate's answer
Where do you usually celebrate New Year's Eve?		
Who do you spend the evening with?		
What do you do on New Year's Eve?		
What do you usually eat?		
Do you have any special traditions?		

How do Mary and her family celebrate Chinese New Year's Eve?

Try to find 3 to 5 similarities between Chinese New Year and the way you celebrate.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SOURCES: clipart left: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/222365300325380593/>, 15 Mar 2015
clipart right: <http://theclipartwizard.com/new-year-day-coloring-pages.htm>, 15 Mar 2015

Fig. 4: Celebrating New Year's Eve – classroom material

My New Year's Resolutions

A resolution is a promise that you make to yourself.
Making a resolution means that you set a goal for yourself
and make a plan how to reach it.

It is a tradition for people to make resolutions at the
beginning of a new year.

Use Will Future!



Personal

Write down two resolutions how you will improve personally.

Family & Friends

Write down two resolutions concerning family and friends.

School

Write down two resolutions how you will improve in school.

SOURCES: text adapted from: http://blogs.scholastic.com/whats_new/2008/12/2009resolutions.html, 15 Mar 2015
clipart: <http://imgkid.com/new-years-eve-2014-clipart-black-and-white.shtml>, 15 Mar 2015

Fig. 5: Making new year's resolutions – classroom material

4.2. “My Favourite Chaperone” by Jean Davis Okimoto

The story “My Favourite Chaperone” portrays the challenges of being an immigrant in a new country from the perspective of a family who has recently moved from Kazakhstan to the United States. While the mother and father both work hard to sustain the family, Maya Alazova and her younger brother Nurzhan attend high school. The children start to adjust to American ways, learn to speak English and make new friends, whereas their parents remain conservative and try to force them to live the way they would have lived in their native country. This leads inevitably to a conflict between Maya and her parents as they misunderstand her behaviour and do not allow her to go to an all-school dance. However, when her mother breaks her ankle and thus cannot do her work as a cleaning woman, Maya stands in for her and takes care of the family in addition to her own duties. Maya as well as her parents realise the importance of supporting and helping your family and in turn become more liberal paying attention to the other family members’ opinions and wishes.

The author, Jean Davis Okimoto, is especially interested in raising the readers’ awareness of the great cultural diversity existing within the English-speaking world. Most of her books and stories depict viewpoints of people in the United States who do not belong to the dominant Anglophone culture (Gallo 78). A great number of characters in the story “My favourite chaperone” come from mixed-race backgrounds, which reflects the author’s own family. Jean Davis Okimoto, who lives in the United States, is Caucasian and married to a Japanese American. The protagonist Maya Alazova is named after the woman with whom Okimoto’s daughter and her husband stayed when they were teaching English in Kazakhstan. The portrayal of the Kazakh family is based on the author’s personal experiences as she spent some time in the country visiting her daughter (Gallo 78-79).

In addition, Okimoto has been participating in various author mentor programmes in public schools in Seattle. One of these schools, Asa Mercer Middle School, served as a model for the high school in the story. The school has a particularly diverse student population with a high number of immigrants

and more than eighty different ethnic groups (Gallo 78). The author has used her personal experiences as a mentor to create a realistic plot and characters that the readers can empathize with in her story.

4.2.1. Intercultural aspects in the story

The short story “My Favourite Chaperone” allows insights into the challenges an immigrant family faces in a new country. Although the story mainly focuses on the family’s new life in the United States, it also explains why they had to emigrate in the first place. This valuable background knowledge helps the reader to understand the immigrants’ reasons for leaving their native country and choosing the United States as a new home. On the other hand, the story shows how migration can lead to a generation gap within a family. While older people might be less flexible in changing their established values and norms, children more easily adjust to a different culture and in turn develop a multicultural identity. In general, the story allows the reader to view the migration experience from an immigrant’s perspective and thus fosters sympathy and understanding.

By portraying life in the United States from an immigrant’s point of view, the short story “My Favourite Chaperone” provides interesting insights into American society and culture. Immigration has had a defining impact on society and culture in the United States as it has always played a major role in the country’s history. Migrants from all over the world have been coming to America in pursuit of the American dream, which refers to “the ideal that every U.S. citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative” (see Oxforddictionaries.com). Maya also perceives this spirit of optimism. “It’s like that in America. It’s a place where things can change for people, and many people always seem to have hope” (Okimoto 44-45).

The United States of America is a culturally diverse nation, whose citizens belong to a great variety of different ethnic groups. “My Favourite Chaperone” highlights the existence of this cultural diversity. By featuring a considerable

number of characters from mixed-race backgrounds in her short story, Okimoto depicts American culture and society in a realistic way. Besides Maya Alazova and her family from Kazakhstan, various classmates and the custodian Mr. Zabornik are immigrants as well. In order to raise the readers' awareness of the challenges immigrants face in a new country, Okimoto relates different experiences of these characters. For example, Mr. Zabornik empathises with Nurzhan when he is teased at school due to his bad English. "Reminded me of how this bully used to treat me when my family came here after the [Hungarian] revolution" (Okimoto 51). This shows that Nurzhan is not the only immigrant who has experienced xenophobia.

On the other hand, Maya's best friend, Shannon Lui, whose family originally came from China, represents a perfect example of successful assimilation to American culture. Shannon and her family have spent a longer period of time in the United States and adopted its cultural practices and social conventions, thus they are fully integrated into the local community. "Everything about Shannon's family is very American. Her mother has a red coat with gold buttons from Nordstrom and her father cooks and sometimes even washes dishes!" (Okimoto 48). Maya is astonished by the fact that Shannon's father does household work as this is almost inconceivable in her native culture. She regards the different allocation of gender roles as typical of American culture. This is a good example of how one's own culture affects the perception and interpretation of another culture.

In order to explain the immigrant family's motive for leaving Kazakhstan, Okimoto gives a vivid account of their problems. Maya Alazova and her family have moved to the United States due to economic reasons. After Kazakhstan's independence from the Soviet Union the economic situation in the country worsened dramatically. "Everyone's pay was cut and the *tenge*, our money, was worth less and less" (Okimoto 45). The family got into great financial trouble after the parents had lost their teaching jobs as the government could not afford to pay their salaries anymore. Thus the Alazovas were forced to leave their home country in order to find better work and living conditions. The mother's sister, Aunt Madina, had already immigrated to the United States after

she had met an American man through an international dating magazine and she persuaded her sister to follow her. "When Aunt Madina asked us to come to America for the hundredth time, we were running out of things to sell and my parents finally agreed" (Okimoto 46). By receiving detailed information about the family's reasons for migration from the narrative, the reader might better understand why immigrants decide to leave their home country.

Moreover, the story depicts how migration can lead to problems within an immigrant family. Migrants need to adjust to a new culture which encompasses different values and beliefs, local customs, and social conventions. If the members of a family do not all assimilate equally well into the new community, serious conflicts might arise. Maya and her brother Nurzhan try to integrate into American society by adopting its cultural practices and societal norms, while their parents try to force them to live the way they would have lived in Kazakhstan. For example, Maya's parents do not allow her to participate in any extracurricular activities except gymnastics. "Mama says she thinks school is strange to have parties and events after school when students should be doing their homework" (Okimoto 47). As the parents do not understand certain cultural differences, they misunderstand Maya and disapprove of her behaviour. For instance, when Nurzhan is teased by other boys, the mother blames Maya for not defending him although this would have made the situation worse. "I don't understand this. In Kazakhstan, if someone insults you, they have insulted everyone in the family. And everyone must respond" (Okimoto 60). When her father sees Maya fooling around with an American boy, her parents are extremely disappointed and punish her. "You have brought shame to your father and this family" (Okimoto 66).

One major problem which hinders the parents' assimilation is the language barrier. While Maya and her brother have learned English at school, their parents do not speak the language well. Thus they need their children to translate for them in their everyday lives. "Mama always wants me to answer [the phone] because she is shy about speaking English. When her work calls, I always speak on the phone to the women whose houses she cleans and then translate for Mama" (Okimoto 60). As the parents depend on their children's

translation when they need to communicate in English, the children hold a considerable power over their parents. For example, in order to help her brother after a fight at school, Maya does not tell her father the true meaning of what the headmaster actually said. While the principal blames Nurzhan for seriously hurting one of his classmates in a fight, Maya tells her father that it was not her brother's fault and thus he should not be punished severely. Moreover, the lack of language proficiency is one reason why both parents can merely do low-qualified work, such as cleaning people's houses and driving a taxi. "It was hard for them not to have the respect they were used to from holding government teaching jobs, but they had high regard for the food they could now easily buy at the store" (Okimoto 46). The importance of language skills is repeatedly stressed in the story. In order to become part of the local community and find more attractive jobs immigrants need to learn the language.

However, Maya and Nurzhan support each other and try to explain cultural differences to their parents in order to raise their intercultural understanding. Nevertheless the parents have difficulties in adjusting to the American way of life. "They don't know about things here, only their own ways. They are like stone." This generation gap threatens to alienate the children from their parents. Maya starts to resent that she does not have as much freedom as her American friends due to her conservative parents. After a severe fight, Maya's relationship to her parents deteriorates until the mother is unable to work after an accident and Maya has to stand in for her. Maya needs to take on adult responsibilities and cares for her family, which makes all other problems seem insignificant in comparison. "It was as if all the work I did at Mama's jobs was to make up for the problems I'd caused. And besides, our family needed the money" (Okimoto 69). During this crisis Maya as well as her parents realise the importance of sticking together as a family and in turn all family members become more liberal with regard to the others' opinions and wishes. As a result, the parents fulfil Maya's biggest wish and allow her to attend the all-school dance. "I forget sometimes when there is so much work that you are just a young girl. This bracelet my mother gave to me when I was sixteen. Girls and boys dance younger here, Maya. So you wear this now" (Okimoto 74).

4.2.2. The story's potential for intercultural learning

“My Favourite Chaperone” is a valuable story for teaching intercultural competence and particularly suitable for the Austrian EFL classroom due to various reasons. With regard to teaching English as a foreign language in Austrian schools, this short story can be used in a great variety of classroom settings. The language in the story is suitable for learners with intermediate language skills as it includes mostly simple sentence structures and no difficult vocabulary. Nevertheless the story is appropriate for more advanced learners of English as well due to its interesting content. Learners should be able to comprehend the gist of the story without the use of a dictionary. In order to increase their reading skills and widen the learners' range of vocabulary, teachers can introduce a new strategy of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in a narrative. By guessing the meaning of an unknown word from its context, students can learn to read a literary text without constantly referring to a dictionary for the meanings of individual words.

In addition, learners do not need any specific cultural background knowledge in order to understand the plot. The story centres on topics that are relevant for intercultural learning, such as migration. These issues relate at the same time to the young adult readers' personal experiences and their own lives. As the narrative is told from the perspective of a young adult girl, students can more easily identify with the protagonist and her struggles. Maya encounters problems with her parents which are familiar to all teenagers. Even though Maya's situation might differ from the readers' due to her migratory background, students can certainly understand her desire for more freedom. The story contains also hints at a first romance, which is a topic that will interest young adult readers.

Moreover, the story is narrated from a first-person perspective, which allows the reader to see the world from an immigrant's point of view. By de-centring from their own cultural position while reading the story, students can better understand a perspective that differs from their own. Taking over Maya's perspective enables learners to gain insights into her intimate feelings, thoughts

and wishes and thus to empathise with her. For example, when Maya is sent to the headmaster's office without knowing the reason why, the reader sympathises with her in this situation. "My fingers tingled with fear. What was wrong? What had I done?" (Okimoto 48).

This short story can serve as a good starting point for discussing the controversial issue of migration in the EFL classroom as it portrays not only the challenges of being an immigrant in a new country, but provides information about the family's reasons for leaving their home country. Interestingly, the narrative depicts the struggles of a family who has left their home country for economic reasons. As economic refugees often do not get as much sympathy as political refugees, the author might have decided to give them a voice in the text. Moreover, the author could not have described the family's reasons for emigrating in detail if they were political refugees who suffered from violence and torture in their home countries as this would have made the story unsuitable for young readers.

The topic of migration is directly related to the students' real world as Austria is a country which attracts large numbers of immigrants today. Austrian students live in a multicultural society and thus are confronted with issues caused by cultural differences. It may be assumed that almost all young adults hold strong opinions on migration and especially immigration in Austria. Their knowledge might be based on different sources of information, such as the media, political debates, and discussions with friends or within the family. However, if their opinions about this highly emotional topic are simplified due to a lack of factual background knowledge and unjust prejudices, young adults might adopt irrational attitudes towards migrants.

Intercultural learning needs to encourage learners to critically reflect on their opinions in order to become aware of assumptions which underlie their thoughts and attitudes towards migrants. By receiving new cultural input and relevant information on migration, students will hopefully become more open-minded and in turn evaluate if their previous assumptions are still accurate and valid.

Teachers need to guide learners in this process of critical reflection by setting effective tasks.

Before actually reading the story “My Favourite Chaperone”, it is important to relate the topic of migration to the learners’ personal lives. With the help of a questionnaire all pupils should explore their own family’s history of migration (see Fig.6). Pupils should use this questionnaire to interview not only their parents, but to collect information on more distant relatives and older generations as well. Most pupils will discover that their family has some kind of migratory background, even if their family members have only migrated within Austria. By examining their ancestors’ histories and understanding their motives for leaving their home countries, pupils learn to see migration in a new perspective. When students realise that migration is a defining part of most families’ histories, they will realise that binary oppositions between “us” and “them” or “Austrians” and “immigrants” are hard to reconcile with cultural realities. This task shows learners that migration is no abstract or distant issue, but concerns them personally (Pichler 14).

After every pupil has collected this highly relevant information about his or her family’s history of migration, it is essential to discuss the results of their interviews in the classroom. Teachers can set different follow-up activities in order to allow learners to share their information. For example, the pupils can write short profiles about their families, which are then hung up in class, and do mini-presentations in class. The general aim of this activity is to make learners aware of the variety of cultures existing within their class and to promote a positive attitude and openness towards cultural diversity. As a consequence learners might respond completely differently to the story “My Favourite Chaperone” and understand the immigrant family’s perspective better.

Questionnaire: My family's history of migration



A) Information about the interviewed person

Name: _____

Nationality: _____

Age: _____

Place of birth: _____

B) Please tell me where you migrated to and why.

- *Where do you originally come from?*

- *Where did you move to? (place, country)*

- *Why did you emigrate? (reasons, motives)*

- *Why did you choose this place/country?*

- *What has changed since you left your home country?*

C) If you have never migrated, please answer the following question:

- *Have you ever considered leaving your home to live in another country?
Why (not)?*

D) How far are these sentences true?

[++ = totally true/ ~ = sometimes true/ -- = not true]

- *In my current place of residence I feel alien. ++ / ~ / --*

- *I regard more than one country as my home. ++ / ~ / --*

- *I sometimes feel rootless and do not know where I belong. ++ / ~ / --*

- *I might leave Austria again and go back to my native country. ++ / ~ / --*

😊 Thank you for your help in exploring our family's history of migration! 😊

SOURCE: adapted from Pichler 14

Fig. 6: My family's history of migration – classroom material

4.3. “The Circuit” by Francisco Jiménez

The short story “The Circuit” portrays the life of a Mexican immigrant family who illegally lives in the United States. The father and his two eldest sons work as pickers in the fields, thus the family must move across California following seasonal crops. As a consequence, Panchito, the protagonist and second eldest son, is denied steady schooling. Nevertheless he dreams of attending school regularly as he knows that education is the key to a better life. Finally he can enrol at a local high school, but he has to leave again soon as his family must move on.

“The Circuit” is an autobiographical text written by Francisco Jiménez, who relates his childhood memories in the story. The title of the story refers to the circular journey migrant workers make each year as they move with the harvest from one place to the next. The short story is part of a series of linked stories of the same title, which are all based on personal experiences of the author and can be regarded as fictionalised memoirs about his life as a migrant worker (see Annenberg Learner). Jiménez was born in San Pedro in Mexico and his family illegally immigrated to California when he was four years old. While they had hoped to leave poverty behind, the family encountered “years of backbreaking work as migrant workers – living in tent camps, moving constantly to follow the harvest, and always trying to avoid ‘La Migra’, the immigration authorities” (see Annenberg Learner).

At the age of six Jiménez started to work in the fields, which prevented him from attending school on a regular basis. Nonetheless he was determined to overcome all obstacles in his way and eventually graduated from high school successfully. However, in the course of his childhood Jiménez and his family experienced hard times and had to suffer serious setbacks, such as the whole family’s deportation back to Mexico after they had been discovered (see Annenberg Learner). When the family had found a way to legally return to the United States, Jiménez continued his education and finally even went to university, where he received master and doctoral degrees in Spanish, History and Latin American literature. Besides his career as a successful and much

honoured author, Jiménez has been teaching at Santa Clara University since 1981 (see Santa Clara University).

Jiménez decided to write “The Circuit” in order to document his own family’s history of migration, whose experiences are representative of a great number of Mexican immigrants in the United States. His primary aim was to depict the lives and struggles of illegal immigrants from their perspective and thus to give them a voice in the text. “I feel that for the most part these individuals have been invisible, so I wanted to make sure that their voices would be heard” (see Annenberg Learner). In order to give an accurate account of his experiences, the author did extensive research. He searched old family documents and photographs for information, visited places where his family had lived and listened to old Mexican music to refresh his memories. As a result, Jiménez claims that while he could not remember all details, more than eighty percent of his stories are based on reality. As he could not include everything, he focused on memorable experiences that had a defining impact on either his life or his personal identity (see Annenberg Learner). By using his own cultural background and personal experiences of migration, Jiménez manages to create stories with realistic plotlines and characters that the readers can empathize with.

4.3.1. Intercultural aspects in the story

The short story “The Circuit” provides readers with relevant socio-cultural knowledge of the United States as illegal immigration from Mexico has had a major influence on the nation’s society, culture and economy. Jiménez argues in an interview that:

These are people who work very very hard, from sunup to sundown, and are all part of the American experience. The migrant experience – working in the fields and harvesting crops – contributed to the richness of our diversity, and so, therefore, that experience is part of who I am as an American, and the history of who we are as a nation (see Annenberg Learner).

In the next section, this thesis will give a brief historical overview on Mexican immigration to the United States in order to provide teachers with relevant background information, which is necessary for completely understanding the issue. In 1942 a temporary guest worker programme, called the *Bracero* programme, was initiated, which allowed Mexicans to enter the United States as short term workers (Wilson 407-408). Meanwhile the large-scale investment of American food-processing corporations in Mexico ruined the livelihood and existence of local farmers and consequently turned them into potential migrants. Moreover, Mexico's immense population growth and the extreme decrease of its national economy led to massive emigration to the United States as well. Gidley states that "By the time the programme ended, the inhabitants of literally thousands of villages in the central Mexican highlands had become economically dependent on seasonal labour migration to the United States" (153). As a consequence illegal immigration continued after the *Bracero* programme had officially ended. Today the majority of large American fruit and vegetable producers in Southwest and Northern California still depend on undocumented Mexican workers as they earn only a fraction of American minimum wages (Gidley 154).

Due to increasing illegal immigration, which has been disturbing to a great number of American citizens, stricter laws have been imposed on undocumented migrants. In addition, harsh measures have been taken to protect the border. Walls and fences as well as high tech detection equipment have forced illegal migrants to use professional people smugglers, known as "coyotes", and to cross in less patrolled sections of the border. As another result many Mexican immigrants have decided to settle permanently in the United States rather than risk to return home and re-enter (Beezley 613). Meanwhile illegal immigration will doubtless continue as long as Mexico cannot provide sufficient employment for its citizens.

"The Circuit" depicts the living and working conditions of illegal migrant workers in a touching way. Panchito, his elder brother and his father must work as pickers in different agricultural fields in order to earn money to sustain the family. Even though Panchito is still a child, he is forced to do hard, physical

work “twelve hours a day, every day, seven days a week, week after week” (Jiménez 24). Except for a half-hour lunch break which they can use to rest in the shade, the migrant labourers slave away in tremendous heat. “Around nine o’clock the temperatures had risen to almost one hundred degrees. I was completely soaked in sweat and my mouth felt as if I had been chewing on a handkerchief” (Jiménez 27). Although the three workers over-exert themselves picking as much fruit as possible, they earn almost no money for their hard work. Panchito works until he is completely exhausted, which has physical consequences. “The next morning I could hardly move. My body ached all over. I felt little control over my arms and legs. This feeling went on every morning for days until my muscles finally got used to the work” (Jiménez 28).

In addition to the harsh working conditions the immigrant family suffers from poor living conditions as well. Instead of living in a proper house, they stay in shacks or garages during the harvest, which are provided by landowners and farmers for illegal migrant workers. “The garage was worn out by the years. It had no windows. The walls eaten by termite, sustained to support the roof full of holes. The dirt floor, populated by earth worms, looked like a gray road map” (Jiménez 26). While the family tries to make the room habitable by cleaning it, there is still not enough space for the whole family. Thus Panchito, his elder brother and his father must sleep under the trees outdoors.

As soon as the strawberry season is over, the migrant workers must move on to find other harvesting jobs somewhere else in California. Thus Panchito and his family can never permanently settle as they must travel from place to place following the seasonal crops. Jiménez argues that the cardboard boxes they used for transporting their belongings can be viewed as a metaphor for their life as illegal migrants in the United States. “Symbolically, cardboard boxes indicate the kind of fragile life that we were living. As cardboard boxes can collapse very easily, they can be destroyed easily, and I felt that our life was very similar to that.” (see Annenberg Learner).

Due to the unsteady life his family leads, Panchito is denied access to regular schooling. While he looks forward to the end of the grape season as he can

then enrol at a local high school, his elder brother must continue working in the fields. “I knew he was sad. He was not going to school today. He was not going tomorrow, or next week, or next month. He would not go until the cotton season was over [...]” (Jiménez 29). Panchito’s strong desire for education reflects his wish of leading a better life in the future. He understands that he needs to acquire certain formal qualifications in order to be successful. Even though he knows that he can never attend school on a regular basis as long as he must work in the fields, he still goes to school at every opportunity. Panchito is on his own in his pursuit of education. He takes the bus to school, enrolls in the sixth grade and works hard to improve his English skills until he has to leave school again. Jiménez explains in an interview that “in this very unstable life that we were living I was looking for some permanence, a place to call my own, and I found part of it in learning, in education” (see Annenberg Learner). While the schools he attended constantly changed, the knowledge and skills he acquired remained with him, no matter where he was.

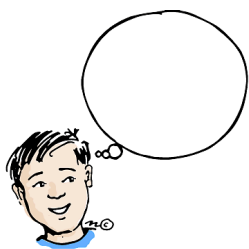
4.3.2. The story’s potential for intercultural learning

“The Circuit” is an interesting short story which can be used for fostering intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. As stated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), foreign language education needs to provide knowledge about the society and culture in which the target language is spoken in order to promote intercultural understanding (Council of Europe 102). “The Circuit” supplies readers with valuable information about American society and culture. By portraying the lives of Mexican immigrants in the United States, learners get to know the viewpoints and struggles of people who do not belong to the dominant Anglophone culture, but are members of a particularly marginalised group. However, while the story allows learners valuable insights into the lives of illegal migrant workers, teachers need to provide additional historical background information before actually reading the story in the classroom to enable learners to completely understand why Mexican immigrants have had such an enormous impact on the United States. Instead of merely giving a lecture about the history of Mexican immigration to the United States, teachers should encourage pupils to conduct

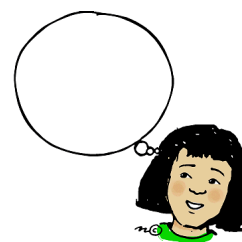
research on this topic and thus to broaden their cultural background knowledge. In addition, a variety of authentic resources, such as documentaries, newspaper articles or other media reports, could also be used in the classroom to spark the students' interest in the topic.

The portrayal of Panchito and his family's fate in the story helps learners to understand the issue of illegal immigration better. As the story "The Circuit" is told from the perspective of a child, it is particularly suitable for the EFL classroom since students can more easily identify with the protagonist. Jiménez chose a first person narrator as he wanted readers "to hear the child's voice, to feel through his heart, and to see life through his eyes [...] and develop compassion and understanding for children who go through those experiences" (see Annenberg Learner). While reading the story, learners take over Panchito's perspective and explore his personal thoughts, feelings and worries.

By setting effective tasks teachers can support learners in the process of empathising with the protagonist. One especially useful task for the EFL classroom is the writing of interior monologues (see Fig.7). While this task helps learners with practising writing in English, it is also relevant for intercultural learning. In order to write an interior monologue, learners have to put themselves in the protagonist's position and imagine how he is feeling in a specific situation. Students need to actively empathise with the character and thus develop even more compassion and understanding than during the reading process. De-centring from one's own cultural perspective and learning to view the world from a perspective which differs from one's own is an essential step towards developing true intercultural competence.



How to write an interior monologue



How do I write an interior monologue?

Writing an **interior monologue** means that you write out what you imagine* a character in a story, book or film is thinking at a specific point in time. You put yourself in the character's position and write about his/her personal feelings, worries and thoughts in a specific situation. So basically, you take what you know about the story as a starting point and expand on it by adding your own ideas.

Use Present Tense and write the interior monologue from a first person perspective!

Why do I have to write it?

Writing interior monologues is a task that helps you understand not only the book, but the world at a deeper level. By empathizing* with people, even if they are different from you, you learn to see things from a different perspective. If you can imagine how other people feel and why they act as they do in certain situations you learn to understand the world - not just this book- at a deeper level.

Do you need an example to get started?

Interior monologue: Panchito's first day at his new school (from the story *The Circuit*)

Everybody is staring at me. I am so scared. I hope the teacher will not ask me any questions. I hate trying to talk in front of the whole class. I have not spoken English for such a long time. We always speak Spanish at home and all the other workers are also from Mexico. I am really afraid of speaking English. What if I don't remember the correct English words? I am afraid the other children will laugh at me. The first day in a new class is always worst. I wish I was with Papá and Roberto picking cotton.

Practice

Choose one scene from the story *The Circuit* that you find especially moving, interesting or exciting and write 100-120 words of interior monologue.

How is Panchito feeling in this specific situation? What is he thinking?

* imagine - to create an idea of sth. in your mind
* empathise – to be able to understand how sb. else feels

SOURCES: text adapted from: <http://missadsit.blogspot.co.at/2011/02/interior-monologue-assignment.html>, 17 Mar 2015
cliparts: <http://www.clipartpanda.com/categories/student-think-bubble-clipart>, 17 Mar 2015

Fig. 7: How to write an interior monologue – classroom material

In addition, the fact that “The Circuit” is an autobiographical story might increase the learners’ interest in the narrative. Students might find it especially exciting to read a true account of the author’s life as an illegal migrant worker in the United States. Jiménez’s portrayal of his personal childhood experiences in “The Circuit” is touching in a way that makes readers immediately empathise with him. Despite the author’s deprived childhood, he has managed to make an exceptional academic career. Jiménez is a perfect example of how hard work, determination and ambition can make dreams come true.

When reading the story “The Circuit” in the EFL classroom, teachers should thus supply learners with information about the author. While participating in a “Meet-the-Author” programme Jiménez gave an interview about the autobiographical nature of his stories. The interview was recorded and is now available for classroom use (see http://www.teachingbooks.net/author_collection.cgi?id=27&a=1). In the interview, he briefly talks about his experiences as an illegal migrant, describes what he did to research his past before actually writing the literary texts and explains why education has been his key to success. This interview is especially suitable for the EFL classroom as it is rather short, gives essential background information about “The Circuit” and can be easily comprehended by learners as it has English subtitles. However, watching the video should be accompanied by effective tasks which promote intercultural learning (see Fig. 8). After the students have received vital information on the author, they answer questions while watching the interview and finally write a personal letter to the author. By writing a personal letter to Francisco Jiménez learners have to reflect on the story and what they have learned so far as well as express their personal opinions.

Meet the author of *The Circuit* - Francisco Jiménez

Name: Francisco Jiménez

Place of birth: Tlaquepaque, Mexico, in 1943

Education: graduated from high school, studied Spanish and History at Santa Clara University



Profession: award-winning author of several stories and books, university professor of Modern Languages and Literature in California

Childhood: When he was four years old his family illegally immigrated to the United States. During his childhood they moved around California and he had to work as a picker in the fields. They had no permanent home and Jiménez could not go to school regularly. The short story *The Circuit* is based on his own childhood as migrant worker in the United States.

An interview with the author.

Watch the interview with Francisco Jiménez and answer the following questions:

- Why does he write his stories?

- What are his stories all about?

- What did he do to collect information before actually writing his stories?

- Why was school so important for him?

Write a letter to the author.

Writing is a lonely business. Authors enjoy getting into contact with readers.
Your letter may inspire an author to keep writing!

Write a thoughtful, personal letter. Don't just ask questions.
Tell Francisco Jiménez something about yourself and why you enjoyed his story.

SOURCES: text adapted from: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-write-author>, 21 Mar 2015
and <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/francisco-jimenez>, 21 Mar 2015
picture of author: <http://www.scu.edu/cas/modernlanguages/facultystaff/jimenezhomepage.cfm>, 21 Mar 2015-04-18

Fig. 8 classroom material: Meet the author – Francisco Jiménez

Moreover, "The Circuit" deals with the topic of education, which relates to the learners' real lives. On the one hand the story illustrates how teachers can be friends who are interested in supporting pupils if they ask for their help. "I spent my lunch hours working on English with Mr. Lema, my best friend at school" (Jiménez 30). On the other hand, it is essential that Panchito not only likes going to school, but regards it as a special privilege. At the end of the story Panchito's wish finally comes true and he can attend school regularly. However this happiness seems to come to a sudden end when he comes home and finds his family ready to move on. As the author does not explicitly state that Panchito must leave school, students can draw their own conclusions from what they read. Thus teachers can ask learners to continue the story and guess what has happened or will happen to Panchito.

Due to compulsory school attendance, children and young adults in Austria take schooling for granted and many even lose their motivation for studying in the course of their school careers. Reading an account of Panchito's struggles might encourage learners to seriously reflect on their own lives and to particularly value education. "My hope is that students who read "The Circuit" will also learn to appreciate what they have, and the work that migrant workers do. Every time we sit at the table to enjoy our meals, we should think about who made it possible to have the food we eat every day", Jiménez argues in an interview (see Annenberg Learner). Reading this story in the classroom can arouse the learners' social consciousness as well as social consciousness and thus offer opportunities for discussing poverty, social exploitation and hunger in the EFL classroom.

4.4. “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” by Roddy Doyle

The short story “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” portrays how a father is forced to overcome his own racial prejudices when his daughter wants him to meet her male Nigerian friend. Harry Linnane is a 50-year-old Irish working-class man, who loves his harmonious family and takes special pride in his close relationship with his four young adult daughters. However, when one of the daughters announces that she is going to bring Ben, a male immigrant from Nigeria, home for dinner, a serious family conflict arises from Larry’s racist reaction. While Larry himself is convinced that he is no racist, he rejects the idea of inviting a black refugee to his own house. As the whole family is very upset about Larry’s behaviour, he must agree to meet his daughter’s friend in order to resolve the conflict. Consequently Larry is forced to reflect on his own assumptions about African people and to confront his prejudices. In contrast to Larry’s expectations, Ben turns out to be an intelligent and polite young man and despite various heated discussions during dinner, Larry finally starts to like him.

“Guess who’s coming for the dinner” was published in 2007 as part of a collection of short fiction, called *The Deportees and other stories*, which were all written by Roddy Doyle for the Irish multicultural newspaper *Metro Eireann* (see Rutten). The paper is regarded as a voice of immigrants in Ireland as its main purpose is “to provide information for Irish people as well as immigrants; for Irish people to know more about immigrants coming to Ireland and for immigrants to know more about the society they have come to live in” (see BBC News). *Metro Eireann* was founded by two immigrant journalists from Nigeria, who supplied Doyle with the relevant background information about Africa he needed for his short story (see Doyle interview). The growing interest in the newspaper reflects a socio-cultural change in Ireland, where immigration has started to play a significant role (see BBC News).

Roddy Doyle, the author of the short story, is a famous contemporary Irish writer, who has published a great number of popular novels, short stories and plays. As he has lived and worked in Dublin all his life, he has experienced the

highs and lows of Ireland's socio-economic development firsthand. Doyle's stories and novels are all set in contemporary Ireland, thus his works give a realistic account of recent Irish history (see Penguin). While his latest collection of short fiction portrays life in Ireland after the economic crisis in 2008, *The Deportees and other stories* was written during a period of rapid economic growth at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At that time Ireland attracted large numbers of immigrants from Africa, Eastern Europe, Spain and Portugal, who entered the country legally and made up ten percent of the population (see Rutten). In addition, illegal immigration increased as well. Doyle tries to explain the reasons for this rapid increase of immigration in the introduction to *The Deportees and other stories* as follows:

It was about jobs and the E.U., and infrastructure and wise decisions, and accident. It was about education and energy, and words like `tax` and `incentive, and what happens when they are put beside each other. It was also about music, and dancing and literature and football. It happened I think some time in the mid-90s. I went to bed in one country and woke up in a different one (Doyle xi).

“With astonishing swiftness, Ireland turned from a country that produced emigrants into a wealthy European nation that attracted immigrants of its own, and from a predominantly mono-racial society to a vigorously multicultural one” (Martin).

4.4.1. Intercultural aspects in the story

“Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner” illustrates how racial prejudices and unjust stereotypes can cause problems within an increasingly multicultural society. By portraying the protagonist's struggle to cope with the new cultural reality in Ireland, the author highlights how presuppositions significantly influence one's attitude towards people from other nations. Moreover, the perspective of a black Nigerian refugee is also depicted in the text, which allows some insights into the lives of immigrants in Ireland as well. One major issue explicitly addressed in the short story is racism. Larry's racist response to the invitation of his daughter's black friend is strongly condemned by all other family members and during dinner the family openly discusses how racism affects

immigrants in everyday life in Ireland. However, the intercultural issues addressed in the story are also relevant for readers of different cultural backgrounds as intercultural encounters have increased worldwide due to globalisation processes.

As explained earlier, large-scale immigration to Ireland started swiftly in the last decades of the twentieth century due to the nation's rapid economic development. As a consequence Irish people were suddenly confronted with a new cultural reality. The short story deals with the question of what happens when an Irish person actually encounters one of these newcomers for the first time (see Rutten). Larry Linnane considers himself a modern, liberal and open-minded man, who has an exceptional relationship with his daughters. "Every time Larry drove onto and off that [Artane] roundabout he felt modern, successful, Irish. And that was exactly how he felt when he listened to his daughters. He'd brought them up [...] to be independent young ones, and that was exactly what they were. And he trusted them completely" (Doyle 3).

However, when one of Larry's daughters wants to introduce a male Nigerian friend to her family, Larry violently rejects even the idea of meeting him. "He never thought he'd be a man who'd nod: yes, I object to another man's colour. Shame was rubbing now against his anger" (Doyle 6). Larry's hostile response to the dinner invitation of his daughter's African friend leads to a severe family conflict as all other family members fiercely condemn racism. Throughout the story Doyle clearly stresses that racial discrimination cannot be tolerated and must be fought by all means. Larry's daughters as well as his wife turn against him and thus force him to confront his own prejudices in order to resolve the conflict. At first he is ashamed to admit that his feelings are racist and tries to convince himself that is not racially prejudiced.

He wasn't a racist. He was sure about that now, positive – he thought. When he watched a footballer, for example he didn't see skin; he saw skill. [...] There wasn't a racist bone or muscle in his body, nothing tugging at him to change his mind about Stevie Wonder or Thierry Henry because they were black. [...]. But, why then? Why didn't he want a refugee in the family? (Doyle 8).

As Larry can neither justify nor explain his racist reaction, he starts to critically reflect on his own beliefs about Africans. To him, Africa is a place full of catastrophes as only negative images, such as AIDS, poverty, civil wars and religious fanaticism, come to his mind when he thinks about the continent. As the protagonist has never personally encountered any African, all these images of Africa are based on stereotypical portrayals of Africa in the media. These popular images all tell “a single story” about Africa, depicting it as a place of stunning landscapes, exotic wildlife and incomprehensible people who suffer from poverty, wars and infectious diseases while they are hoping to be saved by helpful white foreigners (see Adichie). Adichie argues that “in this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar [...] in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals”. This reflects exactly how Larry feels about Africa and his daughter’s relationship with an African man: “it was too far away. It was too different; that was it. Too unknowable, and too frightening for his daughter” (Doyle 9).

Moreover, these images depict Africa as a homogenous place and disregard the great diversity existing within the continent. “Each nation has its own diversity of lifestyles, range in socio-economic levels, mix of economic activity, and set of differences between rural areas and big cities.” (Brown and Carroll 12). Larry shows a total lack of knowledge about Africa’s diversity when he asks the following questions “What sort of society was that? What sort of people came out of a place like that?” (Doyle 9). While the popular images of Africa are true to a certain extent, their portrayal of Africa is over-simplistic and thus not realistic. In order to fight stereotypes which are based on these images, it is important not to tell only stories of catastrophe about Africa, but stories of success as well.

While “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” does not really challenge these stereotypical images of Africa, at least it depicts how a personal encounter can affect one’s attitude towards foreigners. Doyle illustrates in his story the importance of judging every person individually instead of making broad generalisations about whole groups of people (Byram and Hu 662). When Larry

finally meets his daughter's Nigerian friend Ben some of his ethnic preconceptions are challenged. First of all, Larry is astonished when Ben comes to dinner wearing a smart suit (see Penguin). "The best, most elegant suit Larry had ever been close to. A small lad – very, very, black – and completely at home in the suit. The wall looked filthy behind him" (Doyle 11). In contrast to Larry's expectations Ben is an educated, handsome and polite young man, who comes from a middle-class family and seems extremely likeable.

While Larry is torn between unreasonable dislike and respect for this young man, in the end compassion predominates his feelings. Ben's narration of his family's life in Nigeria is again a story of catastrophe. His brother was in prison, his mother is dead and his sister disappeared. "My sister spoke her mind, he said. – It can be a dangerous activity. In some places and at certain time" (Doyle 21). Ben left Nigeria in pursuit of a better life for himself and his future offspring. "I want my children [...] to live as children do here. I want them to take comfort for granted. I want money in my pocket" (Doyle 23-24). After such an emotional account of his family's tragic fate, it is impossible for Larry as well as the reader not to sympathise with Ben and wish him all the best for his new life in Ireland. The racial discrimination he experiences in Ireland suddenly seems even more unfair than before and Larry changes his attitude towards Ben completely. "He wasn't a racist. There was a black man sitting across from him and he wanted to be his father-in-law. [...] Larry was happy with himself" (Doyle 25).

4.4.2. The story's potential for intercultural learning

"Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" is a particularly suitable story for the EFL classroom. Doyle's writing about intercultural issues is perceptive and yet funny, thus it immediately engages the reader. As the text includes a great number of colloquial expressions and some difficult vocabulary, it should be read by more advanced learners of English, who comprehend the gist without the use of a dictionary. Moreover, the story deals with topics which are more appropriate for young adults than children. Even though the story does not centre on a young adult protagonist, but primarily focuses on 50-year-old Larry,

students will be able to find a connection between the story and their own lives by identifying with Larry's daughter Stephanie. As teenage learners might have experienced difficulties with introducing a male or female friend to their parents, they might easily sympathise with her.

While "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" deals with a variety of issues which are relevant for intercultural learning, its critical stand on racism makes the story especially valuable for classroom use. Reading this literary text fosters the learners' understanding of how stereotypes can lead to racial discrimination and thus can cause serious problems. Byram and Hu argue that "problems arise when negative features of stereotypes prejudice our beliefs about people who we do not know. Stereotypes can also offer false justification of serious discrimination against different groups of people, such as foreigners [...]." (660). Larry's racist reaction to his daughter's Nigerian friend is based on such negative stereotypes about Africa, which might be familiar to the readers. As the story highlights the importance of confronting one's prejudices, students can profit from reading the literary text and reflecting on its message.

One major aim of intercultural learning is to raise the students' awareness of their own prejudices against people of other cultures or nations. By encouraging learners to critically reflect on these presuppositions in the light of new cultural input received in the EFL classroom, teachers can foster the development of intercultural competence. If learners realise in this process of reflection that their own cultural assumptions have been over-simplistic or unjust, they will be able to change their beliefs and learn to "judge for themselves the individual worth and merits of others rather than viewing whole groups in generalised and often prejudiced ways" (Byram and Hu 662).

Reading the story "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" in the EFL classroom can be a valuable starting-point for challenging the learners' stereotypes about Africa. If students lack knowledge about the continent, their images of Africa will be over-generalised and thus disregard its great diversity. Brown and Carroll argue that "too often, students hear broad generalizations about Africa as though it were a country, not a continent with over 50 nations with different

histories, societies, and landscapes. And too often, Africans are viewed only as recipients of American aid and not as creators of their own lives" (12). Even though Africa might seem distant and irrelevant to the students' lives at first glance, teachers should encourage learners to discover global connections and to strive for a better understanding of other cultures.

However, the story's full potential for fostering intercultural competence can only be realised if the reading process is accompanied by effective tasks. Instead of reading the whole story in one sitting, teachers should set various tasks for promoting intercultural learning that accompany the reading process (see Fig.9). Firstly, the learners' own associations with Africa can be useful for beginning a discussion about their images of Africa in the classroom and thus spark the students' interest in the topic. Additionally, learners can check some of their general knowledge about the continent by answering the questions on the worksheet. These questions might reveal even more preconceptions and thus contribute interesting insights to the classroom discussion. While this task does not promote intercultural competence it shows what students already know and where teachers need to pick them up in the process of intercultural learning.

After reading the third chapter of the short story, students can compare their own associations with Larry's presuppositions about Africa. The aim of this task is for learners to realise that most people have the same stereotypical images of Africa in their minds due to its uniform representation in the media. In order to promote intercultural competence, teachers need to encourage learners to question these images and critically reflect on their origin.

Viewing Africa from a different perspective

What do you associate with Africa?

Brainstorm some ideas that come to your mind when you think about Africa.



What do you know about Africa?

1. How many countries are there in Africa? _____
2. How many different languages are spoken across Africa? _____
3. Who was Nelson Mandela? _____
4. How much of Africa is desert? _____
5. Which of the following sentences are true?

Africa is the continent with the world's largest population. ☐

Only black people live in Africa. ☐

Africa has more countries than any other continent. ☐

Developing critical thinking

Discuss the following questions in pairs:

- ✓ Where have you seen pictures or movies about Africa?
- ✓ What kind of images have you seen in these pictures? How was Africa portrayed?
- ✓ What stories have you heard about Africa?
- ✓ Who has written these stories or produced the movies about Africa?
- ✓ Why is thinking about these questions important or useful?

What influences our beliefs about other cultures, people or even continents?

- ✓ Watch Chimamanda Adichie's speech "The Danger of a Single Story" first.
- ✓ Read the extract of the speech and summarize its message in 5-7 sentences.
- ✓ What have you learned from Adichie's speech? Has it influenced your image of Africa?

Beyond war and hunger – What else is happening in Africa?

- ✓ Search the internet for one success story of Africa. You can choose a famous person, an innovative African company or even a successful country in Africa.
- ✓ Summarise the most important facts and do a mini-presentation in class.
- ✓ Don't forget to explain why you have chosen this special story of success!

SOURCE: text adapted from Brown and Carroll 15

clipart: <http://clipartse.com/clipart/globe-facing-europe-and-africa-earth-clipart-7356>, 15 Apr 2015

Fig. 9: Viewing Africa from a different perspective – classroom material

Images of Africa



SOURCE: adapted from: Brown and Carroll 15

Fig. 10: Images of Africa – classroom material

With the help of guiding questions on the worksheet students should investigate what has influenced their image of Africa (see Fig.9). In addition to this task, which promotes critical thinking and thus fosters the development of intercultural competence, teachers can show pictures of Africa which combat media stereotypes in the classroom (see Fig.10). Photographs which depict the great variety of landscapes, lifestyles and people that are part of Africa help learners to understand that the popular image of the continent is over-simplistic and stereotypical. Brown and Carroll argue that “by analyzing images from diverse settings, students can counter the distorted information often seen in American movies and news clips” (12). Viewing Africa from a different perspective can open up new horizons and raise the learner’s awareness of the great diversity existing within this continent.

Finally, teachers can use a great variety of additional classroom material in order to deepen the learners' intercultural understanding while simultaneously practicing different language skills. Chimamanda Adichie's speech "The Danger of a Single Story" is another extremely valuable resource for intercultural learning in this context, which can be used as follow-up material after reading the short story "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" (see Fig.11). By giving various examples from her own life, Adichie warns the audience about believing a single story of a person, country or even continent. She explains in a simple yet persuasive way why it is essential to listen to a variety of stories and thus to see things from different perspectives. Adichie is a very charismatic person, whose moving speech allows learners to view the issue from an African's position. Extracts from Adichie's speech can be either read or listened to in the classroom after the learner's awareness of this topic has already been raised, as suggested earlier. Moreover, teachers can encourage learners to do some research about success stories of Africa and in turn present their findings in the classroom (see Fig.9). As this task focuses on positive information about the continent, it helps learners to build up a broader and more diversified image of Africa.

“The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Adichie

“[...] when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my “tribal music,” and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner.

And so, I began to realize that my American roommate must have throughout her life seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not “authentically African.” Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places, but I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact, I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. [...] How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. [...] Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called *American Psycho* and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation. But it would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. This is not because I am a better person than that student, but because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. [...] I did not have a single story of America.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes: There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo and depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe, and it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.”

SOURCE: extract from: Adichie, Chimamanda. “The Danger of a Single Story”. TED global conference. Jul. 2009.
<http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story>

Fig. 11: Extract from Adichie's speech „The Danger of a Single Story“ – classroom material

4.5. “My Son the Fanatic” by Hanif Kureishi

The short story “My Son the Fanatic” portrays the conflict between a Pakistani immigrant living in London and his son, who has suddenly become a strict Muslim and thus condemns his father’s hedonistic lifestyle. Parvez, a hard-working taxi driver, starts to worry about his son Ali when his behaviour suddenly changes dramatically. To Parvez’ dismay, Ali has given away most of his belongings, such as the television, video-recorder and guitar he bought him. Moreover, Ali breaks up with his English girlfriend, stops meeting his friends and does not want to finish his education as an accountant anymore. While Parvez first has the awful suspicion that his son is addicted to drugs, he finally finds out that he has become deeply religious. Parvez is a Muslim himself, but he does not obey the Islamic laws, which clearly stipulate that faithful believers have to pray regularly and must not drink alcohol or eat pork. Thus he neither understands his son’s sudden enthusiasm for a life without enjoyment nor his hatred of Western civilisation. When Parvez tries to talk to his son, Ali fiercely criticises him for having adopted a Western secularised way of life. Parvez is shocked by his son’s lack of respect and does not know how to react. However, after Ali has cruelly insulted Bettina, a prostitute who is one of his father’s closest friends, the conflict finally escalates and Parvez beats him up.

The author of the short story, Hanif Kureishi, was born in London as the son of an English mother and a Pakistani father. His father belonged to a wealthy Madras family and had immigrated to Britain in order to study law, but never finished his studies (see Kureishi). “Kureishi is very much a child of 1960s liberalism – sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll, the elevation of pleasure over responsibility, the imperative of freedom of thought, of expression, of behaviour” (see Brown). The author’s strong personal conviction of these ideas induced him to write about Islamic fundamentalism. In order to investigate the rise of religious radicalism among young Muslims in Great Britain he went to various mosques in London and was shocked by the violent hatred against the West propagated there (see Brown).

What disturbed me was this. These men believed they had access to the Truth, as stated in the Qur'an. There could be no doubt – or even much dispute about moral, social and political problems – because God had the answers. Therefore, for them to argue with the Truth was like trying to disagree with the facts of geometry. For them the source of all virtue and vice was the pleasure and displeasure of Allah (see Kureishi 2005).

Kureishi regards this attitude towards religion as extremely dangerous and thus makes a desperate plea for a critical discourse on Islam among Muslims. Instead of blindly believing, young Muslims need to become self-critical, he argues in one of his essays (see Kureishi 2005).

Moreover, Kureishi observed that the children of immigrants were more religious and radical than their parents, who tried to assimilate to their new home. A large number of these young fundamentalists heavily disapproved of their parents' adapted lifestyle (see Kureishi 2005). Meanwhile, Kureishi argues in an interview that he can understand why Islamic fundamentalism holds a special appeal for second generation immigrants in Great Britain. As this generation lives in a world of two cultural extremes, they look for the orientation and stability provided by Islam. His short story "My Son the Fanatic" is based on his these observations in London mosques as well as on real conversations he had with young radical Muslims (see Brown).

4.5.1. Intercultural aspects in the story

"Kureishi's story reflects the condition of many an immigrant who is caught between the need to belong to the culture of adoption and the need to project an independent, recognizable identity. Except that in this story the conflict is represented through a generational opposition" (Jain 176). Parvez, who has immigrated to Britain in pursuit of freedom, has readily adjusted his lifestyle in order to assimilate to the local society and culture. "[...] he ordered his wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her 'You're not in the village now. This is England. We have to fit in'" (Kureishi 157). Even though he is Muslim, he eats pork, drinks alcohol, and thus does not obey the laws of Islam. He went to a religious school and hated it. Thus Parvez avoids the strict rules imposed by religion and values the freedom in Britain, which enables him to live an

unrestricted life. “But I love England, [...] `They let you do almost anything here`” (Kureishi 159). Western readers can easily identify with Parvez’ values and beliefs as they correspond with their own. Moreover, Parvez tries to convince Ali of his philosophy of life as he wants to fulfil his own dreams through his son “Was it asking too much for Ali to get a good job, marry the right girl, and start a family? Once this happened, Parvez would be happy. His dreams of doing well in England would have come true” (Kureishi 149).

Jain points out that “Parvez is increasingly receptive to western attitudes while Ali turns more and more to Islamic norms. The father is perhaps looking for freedom, the son for identity and security; and while one gradually moves towards the acceptance and erasure of difference, the other nurses a sense of rejection” (176). Even though Ali was born and raised in Great Britain, he suddenly becomes an Islamic fundamentalist and starts to despise the Western way of life. Ali not only changes his own behaviour, but despises his father for his conformist lifestyle. “You are too implicated in Western civilisation. [...] The Western materialists hate us [...] Papa, how can you love something which hates you?” (Kureishi 157). As a consequence his relationship to his father suffers from these irreconcilable differences of opinion. “I feel as if I’ve lost my son,` Parvez told Bettina” (Kureishi 160).

The short story “My Son the Fanatic” depicts how Islamic fundamentalism might appeal to apparently assimilated second generation immigrants and thus leads to their alienation from western society. As the whole story is told from the father’s perspective, the reader gets no insights into Ali’s mind and thus no information about his intimate thoughts or emotions. Kureishi neither provides any explanation for Ali’s sudden passion for religion in the text, nor mentions any general problems of second generation immigrants in Great Britain. Thus the reader might only speculate about the cause of Ali’s sudden change of behaviour and make uninformed guesses about the outcome of the story. Rubik argues that Kureishi wrote this short story with a Western audience in mind. “He skilfully calculates on the world schemata the Western reader will employ to account for Ali’s behaviour and raises expectations, only to disappoint them” (Rubik 1). Even though the author neither actually misleads

the audience nor omits essential information, the readers still “assess the situation from the wrong contextual frames in order to predict and explain the actions of particular characters” (Rubik 1). While reading the story we fall back upon our own experiences as well as world knowledge in order to interpret the text. Thus our responses as readers are based on the assumption that actions within a fictional story follow the same basic conventions as in real life.

After the terror attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent beginning of the war against terrorism, media coverage of this issue has been extensive. There have been numerous reports of terrorist threats posed by Islamic fundamentalists even though the actual number of terrorist attacks on Western civilisation was low. As a consequence fear of terrorism has increased in Western nations and simultaneously a rising number of people have started to perceive radical Islamists as a threat. However, an intense public debate on Islam in recent years has challenged cultural stereotypes and thus has lead to a more differentiated view of this religion. Nevertheless, readers might be influenced by media coverage on terrorism in their interpretation of Ali's behaviour. Western readers might associate Ali's extremist rhetoric with jihad although he never physically attacks anyone. His diatribe against the West suggests that he has been indoctrinated by radical fundamentalists with their religious beliefs. Thus his extreme criticism and hatred of Western lifestyles make readers fear what he might be capable of doing in order to fight for his beliefs. “The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug users and prostitutes. [...] My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop, there will be jihad. I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause. [...] For us the reward will be in Paradise” (Kureishi 158).

However, in the end Parvez is the one who resorts to violence when the conflict with his son finally escalates. So far the reader has expected Ali to turn violent as he appears to be the fanatic throughout the narrative. Parvez behaviour finally shows that his intolerance equals his son's and when he does not know a solution to the conflict he acts like a fanatic himself. Rubik argues that “the story at first seems to confirm a variety of xenophobic stereotypes, but the ending enforces a schema refreshment, first and foremost of our definition of who and

what a fanatic is and how he is likely to behave. Thereby the story forces us to reconsider our own allegiances and reactions” (1).

4.5.2. The story's potential for intercultural learning

While “My Son the Fanatic” has a considerable potential as a resource for intercultural learning, great care needs to be taken with regard to its actual use in the EFL classroom. First of all, the short story is suitable only for more advanced learners of English as readers need a high level of language proficiency in order to comprehend the plot. While the story is not appropriate for children, its highly topical content might spark the interest of young adult students. Bearing this in mind, Kureishi's story can be regarded as a valuable tool for promoting intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. It deals with the controversial issues of cultural identity, clash of cultures and religious fanaticism while simultaneously allowing the reader valuable socio-cultural insights into contemporary Britain, where ethnic minority groups form an essential part of society. Moreover, the short story might especially appeal to adolescent learners due to its depiction of a conflict between father and son. Ali's wish to follow his own way of life might be related to their own teenage problems. These personal experiences might also influence the students' interpretation of the literary text.

In order to realise the short story's full potential for intercultural learning, the reading process needs to be accompanied by effective tasks to attract the learners' interest (see Fig.12). Students may individually brainstorm what they understand by the term “fanatic” before actually reading the narrative. By collecting these ideas on the blackboard, the teacher can start a classroom discussion on the issue. Instead of reading the whole story in one sitting, learners should analyse different parts of the story separately. Teachers can insert questions at turning points and ask learners to stop reading and guess how the story will continue and eventually end. For example, after reading the beginning of the narrative learners may guess the reasons for Ali's metamorphosis. The expectations and reactions of the readers provide interesting insights into their interpretation of the literary text and reveal

prevailing stereotypes which influence these interpretations. In addition a guided analysis of the literary text can help learners to understand the story at a deeper level (see Fig. 12). Besides an analysis of the main characters' behaviour, their relationship and conflict, students should focus on the depiction of culture in the text. Kureishi's portrayal of Western culture in contrast to Muslim culture should be critically discussed in the classroom.

However, learners can especially benefit from reading this text if they critically reflect on their own responses to the characters' actions and behaviour. Thus teachers need to introduce the reader-response model to the EFL classroom and familiarise learners with the concept of aesthetic reading. As already explained earlier, aesthetic reading fosters a personal response of the reader to the text, which goes beyond its mere understanding. If learners concentrate not only on comprehending the meaning of a text, but also take into account personal feelings, thoughts and ideas evoked by the text, the reading experience will be particularly valuable. Learners need to become aware of their own cultural norms and unconscious prejudices and stereotypes that might influence their interpretation of a text.

As aesthetic reading can be challenging for students, they might need the teacher's guidance in this process. Keeping a reading log is an effective means of encouraging serious reflection on what they have read. Instead of focussing merely on the literary text itself, readers learn to pay more attention to their own reactions to a text and to explore them more deeply. By providing a list of questions which guide learners during the reading process, teachers can support learners (see Fig.12). Learners can benefit from a critical reading of "My Son the Fanatic" if they understand "how the story goads [the reader] into collusion with the father's violence to make [one] reconsider cultural stereotyping and Western reactions to fundamentalist provocation" (Rubik 5).

In addition, teachers can make use of various drama techniques to encourage the learners' emotional involvement in the process of making sense of the story. As students actively take over the roles of fictional characters while acting out a scene from a text, they distance themselves from their own cultural position and

explore the text from a different perspective. For example, the conversation between Parvez and Ali in the restaurant is a decisive moment in the story as it reveals Ali's religious fundamentalism and marks a turn in the relationship of father and son. While students role play this scene in class, teachers can use drama techniques such as freezing a moment in time, slowing down actions or changing the outcome in order to teach students ways of coping with difficult situations. Learners can come up with ideas of how Parvez and Ali could behave to prevent the situation from escalating and replay the scene with these different outcomes.

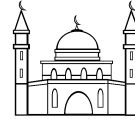
While "My Son the Fanatic" might raise the students' awareness of their own prejudices, it is yet unclear if the insights gained from reading the story will actually have a lasting impact on the readers' beliefs. Rubik argues that

ethical attitudes are affected by so many diverse influences, from social background and peer groups to general political beliefs and daily information gained through other sources, that even if literary texts may provide food for thought right after reading, it is next to impossible to gain proof of any long-term effects on behaviour patterns and convictions (5).

Nevertheless, critically reflecting on one's own cultural position and becoming aware of cultural presuppositions is an essential step towards developing intercultural competence (Liddicoat and Scarino 23).



Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic"



Getting focused

A fanatic is someone who ...

Guided analysis of the story

1. What do we learn about Ali and Parvez?

Characterise both protagonists and compare their lifestyles and philosophies of life.

2. The father-son conflict:

- Do parents have the right to search their children's room or their possessions?
- Explain the reason for the conflict between father and son.
- How do their different philosophies of life affect their relationship?
- What does finally lead to the escalation of their conflict?

3. Which cultures are portrayed in the story?

- How are they depicted? What are typical features of Western culture?
- Comment briefly on the role of religion.
- Do you have any personal experiences with these cultures or people who belong to them?

Critical reading - Keeping a reading log

- What are your thoughts after reading the first part of the story? How do you feel after finishing it? Did you enjoy reading the story? Why? Why not?
- Are you confused about what happened or did not happen in the narrative? Did you find any events or characters difficult to understand?
- Does the story leave you with open questions? Write down questions you would like to ask particular characters or the author.
- Is the story somehow related to your own life? Does the story remind you of an event that happened to you or someone you know?
- Have you changed after reading the story? Could you learn anything about life in general from reading the story?
- Is there an idea in the story that makes you stop and critically reflect on your own life? Explain why this idea makes you think.
- Who else should be encouraged to read this story? Should anyone not read it? Why?

SOURCES: text adapted from: http://classiclit.about.com/od/forstudents/ht/aa_readinglog.htm, 16 Apr 2015
clipart left: <http://www.clipartbest.com/islam-clip-art>, 16 Apr 2015
clipart right: <http://emajmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/>, 16 Apr 2015

Fig. 12: "My Son the Fanatic" – classroom material

5. Conclusion

Since intercultural learning has become a new paradigm in foreign language education, teachers have been facing the challenge of promoting intercultural competence in addition to linguistic competence in the classroom. The aim of this thesis was to demonstrate how five specific short stories can be used by teachers to support intercultural learning in the Austrian EFL classroom. Besides offering teachers practical guidelines with regard to selecting suitable reading material and effective tasks for intercultural learning, this thesis has provided a detailed analysis of the selected short stories in terms of their potential for fostering intercultural understanding as well as teaching material ready for classroom use.

While literature can serve as a valuable tool for intercultural learning, the choice of suitable reading material is essential for its success. Reading stories about the lives of marginalised or minority groups allows learners new insights into the cultural diversity existing within our society. In order to prevent the enforcement of cultural stereotypes, teachers should choose reading material which combats prejudices and shows learners a great variety of viewpoints. The short stories selected for analysis in this thesis cover a broad range of different cultural perspectives and deal with various intercultural issues. Namioka's story "They don't mean it" illustrates how intercultural misunderstandings caused by cultural differences can be solved in a peaceful way, whereas "My Son the Fanatic" portrays a clash of cultures which ultimately leads to a breach between father and son. While Kureishi's story forces the reader to critically reflect on his or her own xenophobic stereotypes concerning Islam, "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" illustrates how stereotypes can lead to racial discrimination and thus cause serious problems. In contrast to "My Son the Fanatic", Doyle's story has a positive ending as the racist learns to appreciate his daughter's Nigerian friend and thus starts to treat him with respect. Even though Jimenez autobiographical story "The Circuit" and Okimoto's "My Favourite Chaperone" both portray the lives and struggles of adolescent immigrants in the United States, they allow insights into completely different life situations. In general, the analysis has shown that stories which depict migration experiences and the related issues of adjusting to a new society and culture, coping with cultural

differences and fighting against racism and prejudices are especially appropriate for raising the learners' intercultural awareness.

Moreover, the reading process needs to be accompanied by effective tasks which promote the development of intercultural competence. As reflection can be considered the most important process in intercultural learning, teachers need to use different methods in the EFL classroom which encourage learners to critically think about literary texts as well as their own responses as readers. Keeping a reading log is one task which guides students towards a deeper understanding of a text as it fosters aesthetic reading. As illustrated in the analysis of "The Circuit", writing a personal letter to the author can also promote serious reflection. If the literary text includes autobiographical elements, learners can write to the author asking questions and explaining what they have learned from reading the story or why they have enjoyed it.

In general, critical reflection can raise the learners' awareness of how cultural prejudices and stereotypes as well as their own cultural background influence their perception of other cultures. In order to be able to critically reflect on their assumptions about other cultures, students need to decentre from their own cultural positions and change their perspectives. While reading a narrative students see the world through the eyes of the characters. Nevertheless teachers can make use of additional methods to intensify this process of empathising. Drama techniques encourage the learners' emotional involvement in the process of making sense of literature. As demonstrated in the analysis of "My Son the Fanatic", drama can be used to challenge learners to try out how to resolve intercultural conflicts or how to deal with difficult situations. Furthermore, the writing of interior monologues is an effective task as students need to actively adopt a different cultural perspective. While writing an interior monologue learners have to imagine what a character is feeling or thinking in a specific situation and thus empathise with him or her.

In general, the analysis of the individual short stories' potentials for fostering intercultural competence has shown that the success of this approach depends not merely on the literary texts, but primarily on the way they are dealt with in

the EFL classroom. While literary texts can provide valuable insights into issues which are relevant for developing intercultural awareness, teachers need to set effective tasks in order to realise their full potential. With my diploma thesis and the practical advice I tried to give I hope I can offer a useful tool for teaching from an intercultural perspective.

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Zusammenfassung

Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es aufzuzeigen, wie fünf spezifische Kurzgeschichten von Lehrer/innen im Englischunterricht eingesetzt werden können, um interkulturelles Lernen fördern. Aufgrund der wachsenden Bedeutung von interkultureller Kompetenz in einer zunehmend multikulturellen Gesellschaft wurde interkulturelles Lernen als Unterrichtsprinzip in den Lehrplänen aller österreichischen Schulen gesetzlich verankert.

Um Lehrer/innen mit relevanten Hintergrundinformationen zu interkulturellem Lernen zu versorgen, gibt das erste Kapitel einen Überblick über die wichtigsten Konzepte dieses neuen Paradigmas im Fremdsprachenunterricht. Neben einer klaren Definition von interkultureller Kompetenz beinhaltet das Kapitel Informationen zu allgemeinen Grundsätzen für das Lehren und Lernen aus interkultureller Perspektive und den rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen für interkulturelles Lernen an österreichischen Schulen. Im zweiten Kapitel wird erläutert welche Rolle Literatur bei der Förderung von interkultureller Kompetenz im Englischunterricht spielen kann. Trotz des derzeitigen Trends hin zu mehr Standardisierung an österreichischen Schulen, bleibt Literatur eine wertvolle Ressource, die wesentlich zur sprachlichen sowie sozialen Entwicklung von Schüler/innen beitragen kann. In diesem Kapitel werden praktische Leitlinien in Bezug auf die Auswahl von geeignetem Lesestoff und effektiven Aufgaben für interkulturelles Lernen bereitgestellt.

Im Analyseteil wird anhand von fünf Kurzgeschichten beispielhaft aufgezeigt wie interkulturelles Lernen im Fremdsprachenunterricht realisiert werden kann. Der erste Teil der Analyse jeder Geschichte konzentriert sich auf kulturelle Aspekte, die für interkulturelles Verständnis relevant sind. Im zweiten Teil der Analyse wird das Potential der einzelnen Kurzgeschichten für die Entwicklung von interkultureller Kompetenz untersucht. Zudem werden konkrete Vorschläge zur Unterrichtsplanung sowie Unterrichtsmaterialien bereitgestellt.

Im Allgemeinen hat die Analyse der einzelnen Kurzgeschichten gezeigt, dass für den Erfolg dieses Ansatzes nicht nur die Auswahl geeigneter literarischer Texte entscheidend ist, sondern auch deren methodische Aufbereitung für den Unterricht. Während literarische Texte wertvolle Einblicke in Themen geben können, die für die Entwicklung eines interkulturellen Bewusstseins relevant sind, müssen Lehrer/innen effektive Aufgaben stellen, um ihr volles Potenzial auszuschöpfen.

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