# Picturebooks for Intercultural Learning in Foreign Language Education. A Scoping Review

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**Abstract**: Picturebooks, if carefully selected, afford a unique experience in the language classroom, and are considered amongst the most valuable of resources for intercultural-related activities. This article reports on a scoping review which attempted to answer the question, *What is known from the existing literature about the effectiveness of picturebooks for intercultural learning in foreign language education?* It presents a corpus of 19 documents, outlines the key issues and themes which emerged from a process of mapping the data and presents recommendations for continued investigation.

**Bilderbücher für interkulturelles Lernen im Fremdsprachenunterricht: Eine Übersichtsarbeit**
Bilderbücher bieten, wenn sie sorgfältig ausgewählt werden, eine einzigartige Erfahrung im Sprachunterricht und gelten als eine der wertvollsten Ressourcen für interkulturelle Aktivitäten. Dieser Artikel liefert eine Übersicht und versucht, die Frage zu beantworten: Was ist aus der vorhandenen Literatur über die Wirksamkeit von Bilderbüchern für das interkulturelle Lernen im Fremdsprachenunterricht bekannt? Er stellt einen Korpus von 19 Dokumenten vor, umreißt die Schlüsselfragen und -themen, die sich aus der Auswertung der Daten ergeben haben, und gibt Empfehlungen für weitere Untersuchungen.

**Livros-álbum para a aprendizagem intercultural no ensino de línguas estrangeiras: uma revisão sistemática**

Os livros-álbum, se selecionados com cuidado, proporcionam uma experiência única no ensino de línguas estrangeiras e são considerados um dos recursos mais valiosos para atividades relacionadas com a interculturalidade. Este artigo relata uma revisão sistemática que tentou responder à pergunta: 'O que se sabe da literatura existente sobre a eficácia dos livros-álbum para a aprendizagem intercultural no ensino de línguas estrangeiras?'. Apresenta um corpus de 19 documentos, delineia as principais questões e temas que surgiram de um processo de mapeamento dos dados e apresenta recomendações para investigação futura.

# 1    Introduction

Intercultural learning aims for the development of an intercultural competence, which according to Huber and Reynolds (2014: 16–17) is

> (…) a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to:
> - understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself;
> - respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people;
> - establish positive and constructive relationships with such people;
> - understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural difference.

Language learning affords an encounter with "such people" (ibid.) through the learning of another language – for foreign language pedagogy "is naturally posited between cultures" (Matos 2012: 7). Literary texts have long been recognized as intercultural catalysts in the language classroom (cf. Bredella 2004) and picturebooks, a form of multimodal children's literature, also hold potential for intercultural learning in education (cf. Botelho/Rudman 2009; Dolan 2014; Short/Day/Schroeder 2016) and language education specifically (cf. Alter 2016; Bland 2023; Heggernes 2021a; Lazar 2015; Morgado 2019).

The relationship between visual and verbal texts and the materiality of the picturebook have been debated since the 1980s, acknowledging "the pleasures [and] the learning processes [they evoke]" (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2018: 4). Much has been discovered on the role of picturebooks in child development regarding cognitive, linguistic, socio-cultural and aesthetic development (cf. Arizpe/Styles 2017; Kümmerling-Meibauer 2018; Nikolajeva 2014). Yet it is also widely accepted that contemporary picturebooks are "not age limited" (Arizpe/Colomer/Martínez-Roldán 2014: 3), for a good picturebook will invite readers of all ages to use their critical interpretative skills to reflect deeply on the often-complex issues they find there. In the field of foreign language education, picturebooks have been used as a rich and authentic source of meaningful input for over four decades (cf. Mourão 2017). When carefully selected, picturebooks furnish a unique experience in the language classroom and are valuable as resources for intercultural-related activities. They expose language learners to a variety of cultures and afford opportunities for "combining critical literacy with intercultural learning, as an empowering process" (Bland 2013: 26). Nevertheless, despite the well-developed theories delineating the affordances of picturebooks for intercultural learning, empirical research is relatively scarce, in particular with regard to (modern) foreign language learning in school contexts, where an additional language is taught for short periods of time per week.

# 2 Rationale and research questions

In a previous review, Heggernes (2021a) focused on empirical research published on reading for intercultural learning in English language teaching (ELT) contexts. Undertaking a Critical Interpretive Synthesis review, Heggernes scrutinized peer-reviewed, empirical research in Journals published in English. She targeted articles which reported using "texts" as a stimulus for intercultural communicative competence in her pursuit to understand how this literature illuminates the processes of intercultural learning in ELT (2021: 4). Of the 36 articles in her review, only four present research on picturebooks and only two (cf. Hayik 2011; Lee/Gilles 2012) were undertaken in foreign language learning contexts, which is the focus of the scoping review reported in this article. To my knowledge, no other review has been published that specifically targets picturebooks as the key input text for intercultural learning in foreign language education.

Scoping studies (cf. Arksey/O'Malley 2005) or scoping reviews (cf. Pham/Rajić/Greig/Sargeant/Papadopoulos/McEwen 2014) are differentiated from literature reviews in that they aim to map the existing literature in a field of interest in relation to its volume, nature and characteristics (cf. Arksey/O'Malley 2005). A scoping review is particularly relevant when the topic has not yet been extensively reviewed (cf. Pham et al. 2014) and in "examining emerging evidence" (Munn/Peters/Stern/Tufanaru/McArthus/Aromataris 2018: 2). According to Munn et al. (2018: 2) the main objectives of a scoping study include:

- To identify the types of evidence in a particular field
- To examine how research is conducted in that field
- To identify the key characteristics related to the target concepts
- To identify and analyze knowledge gaps.

Scoping reviews do not incorporate a critical appraisal of the literature or a synthesis of the findings, rather they chart the evidence. This has been considered a limitation, but as their purpose is to offer an overview of the existing literature in a field of interest, they are often the precursor to systematic reviews (cf. Arksey/O'Malley 2005).

Following recommendations for scoping reviews, my research question was wide, as it aimed at generating a breadth of coverage (cf. Arksey/O'Malley 2005). The review was undertaken with the aim of answering the questions:

- What is known from the existing literature about the effectiveness of picturebooks for intercultural learning in foreign language education?
- Which picturebooks are identified as effective?

# 3    Method and study design

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggest a five-stage framework when undertaking a scoping review. Following the identification of the research question, the framework involved identifying relevant studies, selecting studies, charting the data and collating, summarizing and reporting the results.

## 3.1    Identification of relevant studies

For the identification of relevant studies, the following search terms, combined with the Boolean operators AND and OR, were used in selected search engines: (e.g. *picturebook* OR *picture book* OR *storybook* OR *story book*) AND (*intercultural*). I opted not to use c*hildren's literature* but instead to focus the search more specifically on *picturebook* and *storybook* (as two words and in their compound forms). My interest is in low-exposure additional language learning contexts, which are typically referred to as (modern) foreign language learning or world language learning, but I refrained from using a term associated with language due to the variety of ways language education is referred to and its associated acronyms. In addition, the terms *intercultural learning* required some thought with regard to parameters and thus, typical for a scoping review, the final criteria for selection emerged during the screening phase (Arksey/O'Malley 2005).

Figure 1 below represents the scoping process of identification, screening and eligibility. Screening involved scanning the title, abstract and keywords and eligibility resulted in a deeper reading of the document. This included a check on the literature to confirm it was empirical research with picturebooks in (modern) foreign language education and contained explicit mention of intercultural learning and or associated components (e.g. empathy, understanding, perspective taking).

|  | **Inclusion** | **Exclusion** |
|---|---|---|
| **Identification** | Selected databases<br>Edited volumes<br>Target journals<br>In English<br>Published between 2001–2020 | Other databases<br>Not in English<br>Not published between 2001–2020 |
|  | Google Scholar (n=4,720*); ERIC Database (n=560); JSTOR (n=260); Science Direct (n=37); Edited volumes (n=9); Key journals [Intercultural] (n=6); Key Journals [Children's literature] (n=19); previous reviews (1) | |
| **Screening** | Educational settings<br>Articles, book chapters, reports, handbooks,<br>MA dissertations and PhD theses | Non-educational settings<br>Conference abstracts<br>Duplicates |
|  | n=105 | |
| **Eligibility** | Additional language education (e.g. FL, SL)<br>Picturebooks<br>Explicit reference to intercultural learning or its components<br>Empirical research | L1 / bilingual education<br>Not picturebooks<br>Intercultural learning is not explicit<br>Not empirical research |
|  | n=19 | |

\* The first 1000 entries only.

Figure 1: The scoping process

## 3.2 Selected corpus

A total of 19 documents were included in the selection which represented 17 different studies, projects or descriptions of practice (hereafter referred to as studies). The final corpus is listed in Table 1, which numbers the studies from 1 to 17. One article (S1b) was associated with a doctoral thesis (S1a) [1] and another article (S4b) with a master's thesis (S4a).

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[1]    The study number listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The corpus of documents forming the scoping review

| Study nº | Doc nº | First author | Date | Title |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | 1a | Bae | 2012 | Developing general literacy ability and intercultural sensitivity through English literacy instruction: Using global literature for Korean EFL learners |
| | 1b | Bae | 2014 | Reading global literature with different grade levels and genders |
| S2 | 2 | Bøhn-Abrahamsen | 2019 | Promoting intercultural competence in the Norwegian English language classroom through the picture book *The Soccer Fence* |
| S3 | 3 | Fleta | 2014 | From *Flat Stanley* to Flat Cat: An intercultural, interlinguistic project. |
| S4 | 4a | Furnes | 2016 | Decentering and fiction: on developing intercultural competence using a picturebook in a Norwegian L2 Classroom |
| | 4b | Sindland | 2020 | To measure the development of a class of 5$^{th}$ graders' abilities to decentre |
| S5 | 5 | Gratzl | 2019 | Antiracist education in the EFL classroom: Using Armin Greder's picturebook *The Island* to promote diversity |
| S6 | 6 | Hayik | 2011 | Critical visual analysis of multicultural sketches |
| S7 | 7 | Heggernes | 2019 | Opening a dialogic space: Intercultural learning through picturebooks. |
| S8 | 8 | Hernández-Castillo | 2019 | Fostering cultural awareness through storytelling at a multilingual primary school |
| S9 | 9 | Lee | 2012 | Discussing culturally relevant books online: A cross-cultural blogging project |
| S10 | 10 | Panaou, | 2011 | *European Picture Book Collection II* (EPBCII) Teacher's Guide. |
| S11 | 11 | Perugini | 2015 | Judging a book by its cover: Developing intercultural competence through book covers |
| S12 | 12 | Romero | 2019 | Exploring elementary graders' intercultural attitudes through a guided reading approach |
| S13 | 13 | Schwebs | 2019 | Use of literature circles to promote cultural knowledge and oral communication. Exploring the issues of apartheid and human rights through literature circles |
| S14 | 14 | Wang | 2017 | A Bridge to intercultural understanding: Reading teachers in the U.S. & English learners in China read children's literature books in a global book club |
| S15 | 15 | Wang | 2019 | "It broadens our horizon": English learners learn through global literature and cultural discussion |
| S16 | 16 | Wu | 2017 | Teaching university students' cultural diversity by means of multi-cultural picture books in Taiwan |
| S17 | 17 | Yeom | 2019 | Disturbing the still water: Korean English language students' visual journeys for global awareness |

# 4 Mapping and discussion

The analysis of the corpus involved an approach akin to mapping key information, which entailed "synthesizing and interpreting qualitative data by sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes" (Arksey/O'Malley 2005: 15). A comparative approach between the corpus documents meant that the charting focused on a mix of general information together with specific information related to the research question. Information was charted on the topics listed in Figure 2, which differentiates between general information and specific information.

| General information | Specific information |
|---|---|
| 1  Author(s), year of publication | 1  Research objectives |
| 2  Location and language of intervention | 2  Research methodology (if relevant) |
| 3  Level of education and age of students | 3  Approach to practice |
| 4  Publication type | 4  Positioning of picturebook |
|  | 5  Number and title(s) of picturebooks |
|  | 6  Picturebook categories |

Figure 2: The charting topics covered in the mapping process

## 4.1 General characteristics of the selected corpus

### 4.1.1 Publication date and additional language under study

The search timeframe was the first two decades of this century, between 2001 and 2020, and Figure 3 below provides an overview of the publication dates for the 19 documents in the corpus. All articles were published in the second decade of the time frame. Two thirds were published after 2015 (n=12), with nine of these in 2019, confirming that there is a very recent interest in using picturebooks for intercultural learning, in particular in Europe, where seven of the publications originated between 2016 and 2020.

| Publication date | Total docs | Study nº |
|---|---|---|
| 2000–2010 | 0 | - |
| 2011–2015 | 7 | 1a, 1b, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 |
| 2016–2020 | 12 | 2, 4a, 4b, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 |

Figure 3: Publication dates of the scoping review corpus

Seventeen of the documents focused on sharing research and or practice in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL), which is of no surprise, considering that English is the most learned additional language in the world. The remaining two publications reported on European foreign languages (FLs) (S10) and Spanish FL (S11).

### 4.1.2 Location

Figure 4 below shows the countries evidenced in the corpus. Europe and Asia were the most represented continents, with nine publications originating from studies in Europe, of which five originated from Norway (S2, S4a, S4b, S7, S13). Eight publications reported on studies in Asia, and three of these (S9, S14, S15) involved a collaboration with the United States of America. The collaborative aspect of these projects allowed for very rich opportunities for intercultural learning and involved secondary and tertiary students interacting and sharing their discoveries, interpretations and questions via video conferencing or a blog. These collaborative projects also pose interesting implications for picturebook selection, which will be discussed later.

| Continent | Total docs | Country | Study nº | Nº docs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Europe | 9 | Norway | 2, 4a, 4b, 7, 13 | 5 |
| | | Spain | 3, 8 | 2 |
| | | Austria | 5 | 1 |
| | | 27 EU countries | 10 | 1 |
| Asia | 4 | South Korea | 1a, 1b, 17 | 3 |
| | | Taiwan | 16 | 1 |
| Asia & North America | 3 | Taiwan & USA | 9 | 1 |
| | | China & USA | 14, 15 | 2 |
| North America | 1 | USA | 11 | 1 |
| Latin America | 1 | Colombia | 12 | 1 |
| Middle East | 1 | Israel | 6 | 1 |

Figure 4: Locations of the scoping review corpus

### 4.1.3 Level of education

One of the selection criteria for the scoping process was that the study was undertaken in an educational setting. Figure 5 below provides an overview of the ages of the learners in these educational settings, which included primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

Considering that picturebooks are usually associated with pre-primary and primary school-children (cf. Alter/Merse in press), the review challenges this assumption when the picture-book is associated with intercultural learning. In the corpus, just four of the publications included learners in lower primary education, with six in upper primary (i.e. 10 to 12 years old). There were five publications in secondary education (i.e. 13 to 18 years old) and three in tertiary education (i.e. 18+ years old). Additionally, the teachers' handbook (S10) bridged primary and secondary education (i.e. 6 to 13 years old).

| Age of learners | Total docs | Study nº |
|---|---|---|
| 6 – 13 yrs | 1 | 10 |
| 7 – 9 yrs | 4 | 3, 8, 11, 12 |
| 10 – 12 years | 6 | 1a, 1b, 2, 4a, 4b, 5 |
| 13 – 18 yrs | 5 | 6, 7, 9, 13, 17 |
| 18+ yrs | 3 | 14, 15, 16 |

Figure 5: The ages of learners represented in the scoping review corpus

There was also a noticeable trend in relation to age groups and country of research. Figure 6 presents this data, showing that research in primary education (i.e. 6 to 9 years old) is not being undertaken in Asia, where the studies focus on older school learners and tertiary education (S1, S9, S14, S15, S16, S17). Research into lower primary contexts was undertaken in Spain (S3, S8), Colombia (S12) and the USA (S11).

| Age of learners | Total docs | Study nº | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Europe | Asia | Asia & North America | North America | Latin America | Middle East |
| 6–13 yrs | 1 | 10 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7–9 yrs | 4 | 3, 8 | - | - | 11 | 12 | - |
| 10–12 yrs | 6 | 2, 4a, 4b, 5 | 1a, 1b | - | - | - | - |
| 13–18 yrs | 5 | 7, 13 | 17 | 9 | - | - | 6 |
| 18+ yrs | 3 | - | 16 | 14, 15 | - | - | - |

Figure 6: Ages of learners and countries of research in the scoping review corpus

### 4.1.4   Type of publication

Scoping reviews do not "seek to assess the quality of evidence" or look for "robust or generalizable findings" (Arksey/O'Malley 2005: 18) and for this reason, five types of publications make up the corpus: articles, master's thesis, a doctoral thesis, a book chapter and a teachers' handbook as shown in Figure 7 below. Just over half of the publications were articles (n=11) published in journals, which as expected, targeted a theory-practice nexus. These included three articles in the *Children's Literature in English Language Education Journal* (S3, S7, S17), an open access journal that publishes research into children's literature in the field of learning English as a second, additional or foreign language. This journal was handsearched during the scoping process. Two other journals published two of the corpus articles each: *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* (S6, S9) and *Multicultural Education* (S14, S16).

| Publication type | Total docs | Study nº |
|---|---|---|
| Journal article | 11 | 1b, 3, 4b, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17 |
| Master's thesis | 5 | 2, 4a, 5, 12, 13 |
| Doctoral thesis | 1 | 1a |
| Book chapter | 1 | 8 |
| Handbook | 1 | 10 |

Figure 7: Types of publication making up the scoping review corpus

Six of the articles reported on research in Asia (S1b, S9, S14, S15, S16, S17), as did the doctoral thesis (S1a). These publications were spread evenly across the decade 2011–2020 and, as previously mentioned, researched learners from 10 to 18+ years old. Three articles came from Europe (S3, S4b, S7), as did four of the five unpublished master's theses (S2, S4a, S5, S13), with three representing different institutions in Norway (S2, S4a, S13). All three Norwegian master's theses investigated the picturebook *The Soccer Fence. A story of friendship, hope and apartheid in South Africa* (Bildner/Watson 2014) in the EFL classroom, as did the article associated with the thesis (S4b). The second article from Norway (S7) was part of an article-based doctoral thesis (Heggernes 2021b) and investigated *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* (Sís 2007). The profusion of publications reporting on classroom-based research coming from Norway might be the result of a curriculum which favours the use of literature in English language education together with broad guidelines for intercultural learning (cf. Dypedahl/Lund 2020; Heggernes 2021a). This is strengthened by a tendency to write in English when publishing academically.

The teachers' handbook (S10) represented a European Comenius project that collated more than 60 picturebooks from 27 European countries to be used in "language and second language learning" (Panaou 2011: 4). The handbook represents a summary of the practice which was trialed in schools.

## 4.2 Specific characteristics of the selected corpus

### 4.2.1 Objectives and research questions

Due to the variety of publication types, there was not always a clearly stated research question to lead the activity report in each publication. However, it was possible to extract an explicit aim. Appendix I lists the aims (A) or research questions (RQ) which were salient in each publication.

Just four of these aims and research questions make a clear reference to the name or kind of literature used in the study (i.e. *The Soccer Fence* (S2); *The Island* (S5); *global literature* (S15); *multicultural picturebooks* (S16)). Six studies make reference to literature or

literature-related activities (i.e. *storytelling and picturebooks* (8); *reading texts* (S9), *guided reading* (S12); *literature circles* (S13); *reading and responding to children's picture books* (S14); and *visual analysis and book club discussions* (S17)). In all cases the connection between the form of literature or the literary activity and intercultural education was clearly established. In the remaining seven studies the focus was on intercultural education more specifically (S1, S3, S4, S6, S7, S10, S11).

Literature tends to be associated with either language or literacy learning in most educational contexts (Arizpe 2021), and three of the studies included language and or literacy aims alongside those of an intercultural education (S1, S8, S15). An example is a study which used literature circles to promote cultural knowledge and oral communication while discussing *The Soccer Fence. A story of friendship, hope and apartheid in South Africa* (Bildner/Watson 2014) (S13). All these studies shared results which outlined a positive impact on language and or literacy and the intercultural dimension of the intervention.

The focus of the studies in the scoping review are presented in Figure 8. The intercultural dimension was referred to in all but two (S6, S9) of the studies in the corpus, using the following terminology, *intercultural competence* (n=6), *intercultural awareness* (n=4), *intercultural understanding* (n=3), *intercultural communicative competence* (n=1) and *intercultural learning* (n=1). Additionally, three studies involved and referred to *intercultural dialogue* or *intercultural sensitivity*. These seven referents were not always clearly defined, and the greater number of studies referring to *intercultural competence* challenges Byram's (2021: 5) statement that "intercultural competence … takes place in 'the same' language and intercultural communicative competence where a 'foreign' language is involved".

| Focus of study and or results | Total docs | Study n° |
|---|---|---|
| Language dimension | | |
| Literacy or language development | 5 | 1a, 1b, 8, 13, 15 |
| Intercultural dimension | | |
| Intercultural competence | 6 | 2, 4a, 4b, 5, 11, 12 |
| Intercultural awareness | 4 | 3, 8, 13, 14 |
| Intercultural understanding | 3 | 15, 16, 17 |
| Intercultural sensitivity | 2 | 1a, 1b |
| Intercultural dialogue | 2 | 7, 10 |
| Intercultural learning | 1 | 7 |
| Intercultural communicative competence | 1 | 14 |
| Intercultural competences | | |
| Knowledge and understanding of self and or other | 9 | 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, |
| Empathy / perspective taking | 7 | 2, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17 |
| Respect for [linguistic, cultural, religious] diversity | 6 | 2, 5, 6, 10, 14, 15 |
| Decentering | 2 | 4 |
| Global awareness | 2 | 15, 17 |
| Tolerance | 2 | 2, 10 |
| Anti-racist education | 1 | 5 |
| Taking advocacy | 1 | 15 |

Figure 8: Focus of the studies in the scoping review corpus

In relation to the identifiable competences of intercultural learning, just over half of the studies aimed at developing *knowledge and understanding of self and or other* (n=9), which reflects the tendency for bringing literature into the classroom to "understand the 'Other' and [learn something] about their own 'Self'" (Hoff 2013: 28–29), or in the words of Sims Bishop (1990: 2) serve as mirrors and windows, "that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what make us all human".

Other competences in focus include *empathy* and *perspective taking* (n=7) and *respect for [linguistic, cultural, religious] diversity* (n=6), as well as *decentering*, *global awareness*, and *tolerance* (each n=2), *anti-racist education* and *taking advocacy* (each n=1). This latter competence, *taking advocacy*, relates closely to global citizenship education, which is becoming increasingly part of FL education across contexts (cf. Lourenço 2018; Lütge 2016;

Porto 2019). All studies described a positive development in all the identified competences as a result of the intervention.

### 4.2.2 Underpinning theories

The theories that underpinned most of the studies aligned with sociocultural and learner-centered approaches akin to "teaching as negotiation" (Alexander 2008: 79) and combined the fields of literary studies, cultural studies, education studies, teaching methodology and even applied linguistics, referred to by Bland (2023: 2) as "English subject pedagogy" (see Figure 9 below). Reader response theories happily coinhabit with intercultural learning, as both are dialogical and reflective (cf. Bredella 2000), and two studies highlighted this connection (S9, S13), although several more implicitly made use of reader response theory. Whilst mentioned in just one study each, *dialogic theory* (S7), *critical literacy theory* (S6) and *antiracist education* (S5) are all highly relevant for placing intercultural learning firmly within language education, as they support practitioners in setting up the "interactive paradigm" (Bredella, in Delanoy 2017: 16), enabling dialogue between the picturebook and the reader(s), learning through talk (cf. Knight 2020), and a dialectic approach (cf. Ibsen 2000). Nevertheless, these approaches suggest that certain learner skills should be clearly developed which allow for a "democratic form of pedagogy" (ibid: 22). Foreign language teachers require the competence to scaffold learners' ability to talk meaningfully and coherently (cf. Alexander 2020; Mercer/Littlejohn 2007) about the picturebooks they experience and just two of the publications made an explicit case for teacher mediation (S7, S13) and recognized the need for "increased teacher participation … to challenge students' perspectives when reading multicultural literature and political texts" (Schwebs 2019: 89).

| Theories / approaches / models which explicitly informed practice | Study nº |
| --- | --- |
| Theories / approaches | |
| Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978) | 14, 15, 17 |
| Reader-response theory/aesthetic stances (Rosenblatt 1978/1994; Brookes 2006) | 9, 13 |
| Global awareness (e.g. Hanvey 1982) | 17 |
| Framework of multi-cultural curriculum reforms (Banks 2008) | 16 |
| Translanguaging (Garcia 2008) | 8 |
| Dialogic theory (e.g. Alexander 2008) | 7 |
| Critical literacy theory (e.g. Luke/Freebody 2000) | 6 |
| Antiracist education (e.g. Levy/Hughes 2009) | 5 |
| Content and language integrated learning (Coyle et al. 2010) | 3 |

Figure 9: The theories and approaches that informed the scoping review corpus

### 4.2.3 Research methodology

As the corpus contains a variety of publication types, not all included information about a research methodology. Three publications did not refer to an approach or data collection as such (S3, S10, S11), and the remaining listed data collection instruments did not always situate their research within a particular methodology. Figure 10 lists the approaches identified.

| Research methodology | Total docs | Study n° |
|---|---|---|
| Experimental design | 4 | 1a,1b, 4a, 4b |
| Action research | 3 | 13, 14, 15 |
| Case study approach | 1 | 7 |
| Practitioner inquiry research | 1 | 6 |
| Mixed method approach | 2 | 8, 16 |

Figure 10: Research methodologies in the scoping review corpus

Nine studies identified with a particular methodology. Two were experimental or quasi-experimental in approach (S1, S4) and incorporated pre- and post- testing to determine changes in learning, attitude or opinion during the intervention. Just one study incorporated a control group and took a predominately quantitative approach to the analysis (S1); however, both studies triangulated data with more qualitative approaches like interviews (S1) or focus groups and observation (S4). Four studies identified with approaches associated with teacher research. Three were described as action research studies (S12, S13, S14) and another as practitioner inquiry (S6).

The trends associated with the 16 studies that described data collection generally point to using mixed methods to assemble evidence of intercultural learning. In many cases (n=11) this involved analysing or describing student-produced artefacts or products and or transcribing audio-recorded class discussions around the picturebook or within focus groups. The three studies which provided no information about data collection (S3, S10, S11) recounted approaches to practice and a perceived impact based on the learners' engagement with the intervention activities. In all but three publications (S1a, S1b, S10) these were examples of students' responses to the picturebook and or related tasks (involving speaking, writing, drawing or drama as modes of communication) shared or discussed, which further sustains a focus on the picturebook in its transformative capacity.

### 4.2.4 Approach to practice

*Approach to practice* identifies how the picturebooks were brought into the learning-teaching contexts. Figure 11 below displays the four trends emerging from the analysis: *teaching sequences*, *response to reading aloud*, *learner exchanges* and/or *reading circles* or *book clubs*.

| Approach to practice | Total docs | Study nº | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Europe | Asia | Asia & North America | North America | Latin America | Middle East |
| Response to reading | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 6 |
| Reading circle/book club | 2 | 13 | 17 | 9, 14, 15 | - | - | - |
| Learner exchange | 3 | - | - | | - | - | - |
| Teaching sequence | 13 | 2, 3, 4a, 4b 5, 7, 8, 10 | 1a, 1b, 16 | - | 11 | 12 | - |

Figure 11: Approaches to practice in the scoping review corpus

Thirteen of the publications used teaching sequences as the main approach to practice for the study, which is hardly surprising considering the corpus is from educational contexts. These sequences were undertaken during foreign language and or interdisciplinary activities over periods of one to several weeks. They generally involved interventions that targeted a particular intercultural competence, for example *decentering* (S4a, S4b), *antiracist education* (S5) or *tolerance* and *respect for others* (S10). One study lasted for 15 weeks with four twenty-minute sessions per week and investigated intercultural sensitivity (S1a, S1b) while implementing a guided reading approach. Another study, unique in itself, was a 36-hour college course for Mechanical Engineering, Information and Technology, and Business and Management students, and targeted knowledge and understanding of self and others and the development of empathy (S16).

A form of guided reading (cf. Fountas/Pinnell 2001) was referred to and employed as a pedagogical approach in two of the studies in this category (S1, S12). Like the conventional pre-, during and post-reading structure (cf. Ellis/Brewster 2002), this approach emphasizes the importance of activating background knowledge and learners' prior experiences, which will be relevant to their reception of the picturebook's content, on both a language and intercultural level. Thus, rather than using learner literature and graded readers for language and literacy development, picturebooks with intercultural themes are selected.

One study involved learners in a response to reading approach and differentiated from a teaching sequence, as learners only experienced the picturebook through a teacher-led interactive read-aloud and were then asked to draw what the story meant for them and present their drawings to the class (S6). The teacher-researcher introduced "'risky texts' and

critically [discussed] them [to create] the tension necessary to raise students' awareness of social complexities and urge them to critique their beliefs and social practices" (Hayik 2011: 97), thus targeting the students' response to the picturebook through the lens of critical literacy, rather than their engagement with it via specific language-related activities and tasks.

Two studies involved book clubs or literature circles (S13, S17) in secondary school contexts, with a focus on talk and discussion to develop understanding and empathy in class groups. The remaining three studies were developed around learner exchanges (S9, S14, S15), which required that learners engage in a reading circle and discuss the picturebooks with groups of learners in another country via a blog in secondary education (S9) or through video conferencing in tertiary education (S14, S15). This prioritized discussion and reflection through an intercultural dialogue with students from other countries. Virtual exchanges have been identified as a commonplace approach to developing intercultural learning; however, a recent review by Dooly and Vinagre (2022: 398) suggests that gains in intercultural competence are difficult to measure and tend to be "assumed" rather than measured. Using a picturebook as the conduit for intercultural learning, rather than the virtual exchange itself permits deep learning and is more likely therefore to go beyond the superficial level.

An example of such deep learning was associated with a blogging project between tenth grade Taiwanese students learning English and fifth grade students from the USA, who used culturally relevant texts as a prompt for blogging together (S9). The project involved teachers and their learners reading the picturebooks and discussing them in their respective classes, and then the learners writing their ideas, impressions and responses in blog posts. There was clear evidence of the learners' ability to critically read against the text in both groups. For example, they "sophisticatedly discussed the social contexts presented in the books, they also adopted a critical stance as they assessed the world around them which helped form those contexts" and made "critical judgments of the legitimacy of the texts" (Lee/Gilles 2012: 172). In all, the learners were able to "go beyond acknowledgment and appreciation of one's own and others' cultures, by trying to evaluate social justice" (ibid.). It prompted them to "reflect on the world in which they live" (ibid.).

### 4.2.5    The positioning of the picturebook

The position of the picturebook in the four approaches to practice was revealing, and five different forms of placement were mapped in the analysis. The first of these (S3) situated the picturebook as a springboard for a range of creative intercultural activities. The picturebook *Flat Stanley* (Brown 1964) was not explicitly relevant for intercultural learning itself but spawned an international project which involved learners exchanging information about themselves and their contexts.

The remaining four placements featured the picturebook and dialogue around its theme(s) with the teacher and or peers as key to the intervention (all studies except S3), thus recognizing the picturebook for its transformative potential, for according to Fialho (2019: 11),

> […] the purpose of literature lies in the experience itself, in its power to prompt us to connect deeply and conscientiously with our emotions, deepening our senses of who we are, what we are in this world for, and how we are in a relationship with others.

This suggests the picturebook is relevant in its transformative capacity as a vehicle, or as previously suggested, a conduit for intercultural learning through dialogue and interaction. Transformation implies a marked change, and this was considered evident in many of the studies and publications, but especially in those that involved Others in a different country (S14, S15).

Reference to the dialogue and dialogic potential for developing intercultural learning was not always developed explicitly, but 12 of the studies referred extensively to the use of discussion – i.e. picture books for discussion (S10), with three studies highlighting critical discussion (S6, S16) and dialogic talk (S7) to support reflection for intercultural learning. In one study, mention was made of the students using their own languages to support deeper understanding and discussion (S17). Five of the studies did not include extension or follow-up activities but relied upon this discussion as one of the main sources of data collection, via transcriptions, as well as observations and field notes (S6, S7, S14, S15, S17). Figure 12 provides an overview of the place of the picturebook in the interventions.

| Picturebook(s) used … | Study nº |
|---|---|
| as a springboard for a related learning sequence | 3 |
| to prompt dialogue and interaction with peers | 6, 7, 17 |
| to prompt dialogue and interaction with peers together with related tasks / activities | 1a, 1b, 2, 4a, 4b, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 |
| to prompt dialogue and interaction with others in a different country | 14, 15 |
| to prompt dialogue and interaction with peers together with related tasks / activities with others in a different country | 9 |

Figure 12: The picturebook in the interventions

### 4.2.6 The Picturebooks

### 4.2.6.1 The selection criteria

The number of picturebooks used in the corpus studies ranged from one to over 60, however the majority (n=11) developed the intervention with just one picturebook. Figure 13 provides an overview of this information.

| Nº of picturebooks | Total docs | Study nº |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 11 | 2, 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 17 |
| 2–4 | 3 | 12, 14, 15 |
| 7 | 1 | 9 |
| 13 | 1 | 16 |
| 25 | 2 | 1a, 1b |
| 60+ | 1 | 10 |

Figure 13: Number of picturebooks in the scoping review corpus

Eight of the studies defined the selected picturebooks within what has been referred to as *global literature* (S1, S5, S6, S9, S14, S15, S16, S17). Hadaway and McKenna (2007: 9–10) define global literature as that which facilitates "reading across the boundaries of culture, race, ethnicity, language, religion, social and economic status, sexual orientation, and physical and intellectual ability", which implies reading about "one's own culture as well as across diverse perspectives" (ibid.). Short, Day and Schroeder (2016: 5) include *international literature* and *multicultural literature* in the overarching set of global literature. International literature is considered that which has been "written and published in another country" and multicultural literature is that which "highlights the lives of people from marginalised and underrepresented groups in [reader's country]" (ibid.). These are not entirely distinct terms, as it will depend on where the book is being read, who is reading it and which cultural affiliations the readers have.

Figure 14 presents the data, which also shows that one study referred to *culturally relevant texts*, as texts that "allow students to see their cultures represented in the school environment" (Lee/Gilles 2012: 163). Here the focus is predominantly on the notion of literature as a mirror for "self-affirmation" (Sims Bishop 1990: 12). Lee and Gilles' study involved students in Taiwan and the USA who engaged with picturebooks that mainly "illustrate minority children as main characters and portray the character's feelings/emotions and desires/hopes" (Lee 2021: 36).

| Label for the picturebook(s) | Total docs (n=11) | Study nº |
|---|---|---|
| Global literature | 4 | 1a, 1b, 14, 15 |
| Multicultural literature | 4 | 5, 6, 16, 17 |
| Literature representing global issues | 2 | 4a, 4b |
| Culturally relevant texts | 1 | 9 |

Figure 14: Labels for the picturebooks used in the scoping review corpus

In all, just one study involved the identification of a very clear selection criteria (S1) which not only considered literary aspects but the learners and their school curriculum. Though specific to South Korea, the criteria are of interest due to the clear headings and possible replicability across contexts (cf. Bae 2012: 151–154). The criteria included:

- Learners' reading and interest levels
- Topics in the national curriculum
- Cultural relevance and authenticity (i.e. author's perspective and background)
- Plot and positioning of the main character
- Stereotypes in lifestyles
- Diversity in the illustrations
- Affordances for literacy and reading instruction

A set of picturebooks is selected for a particular group of learners following the learning objectives proposed by the teaching / learning context, and this set of criteria allows for such specificity.

### 4.2.6.2 Trends in the picturebook selection

In attempting to see a trend in the kind of picturebooks selected and recognising that their central topics and genres varied enormously, I looked for online information and summaries of 56 picturebooks listed in 15 of the studies[2] and was able to analyze 49 picturebooks in this way. Following the assumption that these picturebooks respect *diversity* (cf. Leahy/ Foley 2018) and are in accordance with the three categories suggested by Leland, Lewison and Harste (2013: 60) which include, "*social issues*, *multicultural* experiences and *international* stories and global events" (italics in original), they could be analyzed according to the sub-categories in Table 2, which combine cited definitions and personal reflections.

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[2]    Study 3 was omitted because the picturebook was not the vehicle for intercultural learning and Study 10 because there were over 60 picturebooks in 27 languages, which made it impossible to access and adequately categorize them.

Table 2: Categories of analysis for the scoping review picturebooks

| Category 1: Books about social issues | Category 2: Books about multicultural experiences | Category 3: International stories and global events |
|---|---|---|
| Picturebooks that "do not make difference visible, but rather explore how differences in culture, language, history, class, gender, sexual orientation and race *make* a difference" (Leland et al. 2013: 60, italics in original).<br><br>Picturebooks that are controversial challenge the commonplace, prompt discussion and connect the local to the global. | Picturebooks that are centered on differences, often with the main character depicted as a minority (cf. Leahy/Foley 2018).<br><br>Culturally specific books that depict the unique experiences of non-White cultural groups (cf. Lee 2021). | Picturebooks that bring the diversity of the world into the classroom.<br><br>Picturebooks which can teach about a particular culture or religion (cf. Leahy/Foley 2018).<br><br>Picturebooks which depict or contribute to understanding the complexity of economic, social, political, aesthetic, moral, historical and geographical contexts of a particular cultural group (cf. Leland et al. 2013). |

Graph 1 below divides the categories the 49 picturebooks represented into two sets. Set 1 represents Study 1 (picturebook n=21), the context of which is South Korea, and Set 2 represents the remaining studies minus S3 and S10 (picturebook n=28). The most common category, when both sets are combined, is category 2b, *culturally specific books that depict the unique experiences of non-White cultural groups* (n=15). Picturebooks in this category provide a glimpse into a culture often, but not always, caught in another, for reasons of migration. They frequently emphasise the struggles experienced by the protagonist(s) and clearly portray the characters' feelings and emotions, as well as their desires and hopes (cf. Lee 2021). In most cases the main character belonged to a minority group in the USA. These picturebooks provide unmistakable examples of intercultural encounters (cf. Barrett/Byram 2022) and include: *Angel child, dragon child* (Surat/Vo-Dinh 1983), which is about a Vietnamese girl who arrives in the USA with her father and siblings (Set 2); or *My name is Yoon* (Recorvits/Swiatkowska 2007), which is about a young Korean girl in the USA (Set 1). It is also of interest that Set 1 does not include many picturebooks in Category 3b, *picturebooks which can teach about a particular culture or religion*, whereas Set 2 does. This may be due to the specificities of the South Korean group of learners and the researcher selection criteria.
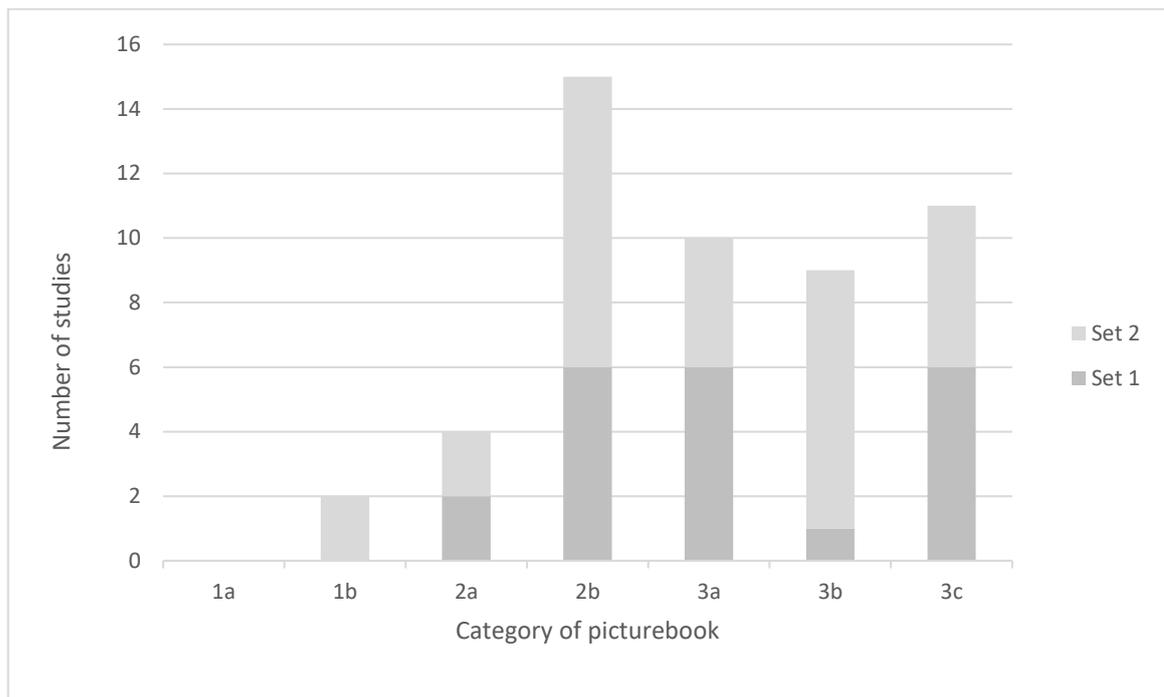
Graph 1: Picturebook categories in the scoping review corpus

The most common categories in Set 1 were Categories 2b, 3a and 3c, with six picturebooks each. An example from Category 3a *picturebooks that bring the diversity of the world into the classroom* is *To be a kid* (Ajmera/Ivanko 1999), which provides a photographic depiction of children experiencing everyday moments across the globe. An example from Category 3c, *picturebooks which contribute to understanding the complexity of a particular cultural group* is *Ron's big mission* (Blue/Naden 2009), based on a historical event in segregated South Carolina in the 1950's, when a Black child attempts to obtain a library card.

The most common categories in Set 2 were Categories 2b, 3b and 3c, with nine, eight and five picturebooks respectively. An example from Category 3b, *picturebooks which can teach about a particular culture or religion* is *Malala: Activist for Girls' Education* (Frier/Fronty 2017), a biography of Malala Yousafzai, who fought for girls' education rights in Pakistan, or *My wobbly tooth must not ever never fall out* (Child 2006), a story about the tooth fairy. An example from Category 3c, *picturebooks which depict / contribute to understanding the complexity of a particular cultural group* is *The Soccer Fence. A story of friendship, hope and apartheid in South Africa* (Bildner/Watson 2014) and tells about a Black child who wants to play football during apartheid.

Picturebooks in Category 1 are only evident in Set 2, with two picturebooks associated with Category 1b, p*icturebooks that challenge the commonplace, prompt discussion, and connect the local to the global*. These were *The Island* (Greder 2007), "a picturebook that challenges simple and optimistic narratives about inclusion and tolerance" (García-González/Véliz/Matus 2020: 546) and is an allegorical narrative about migration, xenophobia,

and intolerance. The other was *Feathers and Fools* (Fox/Wilton 1989), again an allegory, but about the foolishness and prejudice of war and featuring birds as the main characters. Both picturebooks were selected with clear objectives related to addressing (religious) conflicts (S6) and becoming consciously aware of (own) prejudices (S5). Both picturebooks include disturbing or disquieting episodes, which invite readers "to rethink what we understand to be true and ordinary and for whom and to generate knowledge from the resulting sites of struggle" (Whitelaw 2017: 34). In the case of both picturebooks, teachers would have been required to carefully mediate discussion and interaction, although this was not explicit in the documents.

Category 1a, *picturebooks that do not make difference visible, but rather explore how differences in culture, language, history, class, gender, sexual orientation and race make a difference* was not evident in either Set 1 or Set 2. Examples provided by Leland et al. (2013) include *Voices in the park* (Browne 1998), a story about social class and status, and *Ian's walk* (Lears/Ritz 1998), a story about an autistic child and his sister's eventual appreciation of how different he is. The former is analyzed and recommended for English FL contexts in Mourão (2015) and Birketveit (2013). Leland et al. (2013) suggest that picturebooks about social issues are often excluded from the classroom as teachers find them "too disturbing or uncomfortable to use" (61). Additionally, in foreign language contexts, practitioners may not consider these titles as relevant for their challenging themes will not fit the language curriculum, even if they might be of cross-curricular relevance.[3]

A further trend in the selected picturebooks is associated with the focus on human characters and the respective settings. This might be related to the very nature of interculturality, which we associate with human interaction, or as referred to earlier, most studies involved older learners, and human characters might be considered more appealing to these older readers. Human characters would certainly attune to the description given by Leland et al. (2013: 60), who suggest that:

> The best of social issues, multicultural and international children's literature shatters images of 'the other' by presenting characters who are both like ourselves and those who are very different from us. In these books characters are portrayed in realistic, dynamic, non-stereotypical, and multidimensional ways.

Of the 49 picturebooks analyzed, just four included animal characters. Two of these picturebooks belonged to Category 3a: *picturebooks that bring the diversity of the world into the classroom*. These were *Ballroom Bonanza* (Harris/Rycroft 2010), an ABC book with animals from around the world[4] playing instruments and dancing, and *Somewhere in the*

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[3]   A recent exception is the Erasmus+ project ICEPELL which brings social issues via citizenship topics into the EFL classroom through picturebooks: https://icepell.eu/

[4]   This category refers to picturebooks with characters or settings that represent many different places in the world, rather than one area, country or continent.

*world right now* (Schuett 1995), a picturebook about what is happening in different places in the world at the same time. Another was an adaptation of classic Indian tale featuring seven blind mice and an elephant, *Seven blind mice* (Young 2002), and belonged to Category 3a. The fourth picturebook, *Feathers and Fools* (Fox/Wilton 1989), was already discussed in Category 1b, and features birds and uses symbolism associated with *magnificent* peacocks and *elegant* swans and the differences between them.

Finally, and mostly due to the context in which the study took place (i.e. students in South Korea, with the researcher studying in the USA), almost a third of the picturebooks (n=13) in Set 1 featured characters in the USA, whereas those remaining were situated around the world (n=5), the Middle East (n=2) and Europe (n=1). In Set 2, the characters and settings were slightly more diverse and included the USA (n=11), Asia (n=6), the African continent (n=3), Europe (n=3), unidentifiable (n=3), and the world (n=2). This raises the question: "To what extent are these picturebooks representing diversity?", especially when more than one picturebook from a similar context may be used in the classroom.

# 5 Summarising and identifying gaps

So, what is known from the existing literature about the effectiveness of picturebooks for intercultural learning in foreign language education, and which picturebooks are these? In this last section I provide a summary of the findings and attempt to identify some of the gaps for future research.

## 5.1 Summarising the findings

Introducing picturebooks as a vehicle for intercultural learning is confirmed to be a recent phenomenon and has become gradually more prevalent in FL education since 2011, with an emphaisis on English FL contexts. The final corpus has shown that picturebooks are used with learners from lower primary education through to upper secondary and tertiary education, challenging the commonly held belief that picturebooks are for younger children (cf. Alter/Merse in press). There is a prevalence of master's theses in Europe, although the majority of documents in the corpus were articles. There were two doctoral studies, one which was already published and one which was in the making at the time of data collection.

Common approaches to practice relied upon classroom-based teaching sequences which targeted a particular aspect of intercultural learning. There were also examples of virtual exchanges, book clubs and literature circles, and a study involving a response to reading approach. The picturebook was most often the vehicle for intercultural learning through dialogue and talk, usually in association with planned activities which further extended the intercultural focus. Despite being a common objective for introducing literature into the FL classroom, most studies did not aspire towards language (and or literacy) and intercultural

learning aims, but centered attention on the intercultural with a clear emphasis on developing the intercultural dimension of knowledge in relation to self and Other. Empathy, perspective taking and decentering, as well as respect for diversity and tolerance, were the most evident competences identified in the corpus. Approaches to research, when relevant, involved mixed methods, with just two studies that might be considered experimental. Action research and practitioner enquiry were also evident, and learners' responses, artefacts and final products were common forms of analyzed data.

The majority of studies were developed around one picturebook, each for a determined purpose associated with an intercultural competence. These serve as examples of possibilities for others to consider. Those studies that brought more picturebooks into the classroom tended to select multicultural or international literature which was appropriate for a particular context. The picturebook lists resulting from these studies require careful reflection around their applicability in different settings.

## 5.2 Identifying the gaps

A corpus of 17 studies (or 19 documents) is very small, especially when only two thirds are published documents, the remaining being master's theses, a doctoral thesis, and a Comenius Project Handbook. This is the distinctiveness of a scoping review. However, it also identifies the first gap – the lack of published research. Nevertheless, if the trend is sustained, there will be a continued increase in publications. The article-based thesis is now complete (Heggernes 2021b) and the profusion of master's theses coming out of Norway continues (e.g. Hafne 2022; Veddegjerde 2022). Published empirical research involving teachers and learners from primary to higher education is also forthcoming (cf. chapters in Alter/Merse in press; articles in a forthcoming special issue of *Language Teaching for Young Learners Journal* 2024; Valente/Mourão 2022).

### 5.2.1 Mapping teacher research

The apparent trend of master's theses reporting on (student) teacher research which involved taking picturebooks into the classroom suggests a gap of a certain kind. Such research is inherently empirical, yet rarely published, despite an important step in action research being "going public" (Nunan 2018: 21). So, perhaps dissertation supervisors and teacher mentors could support and encourage dissemination of this research in publications and forums which will reach practitioners (e.g. in blogs, FL teacher association journals and newsletters), and or other researchers (e.g. in journals such as *Children's Literature in English Language Education*, which readily publishes articles by practitioners).

During the scoping process I debated using English abstracts from master's theses and articles in other languages. I had easy access to these in Portuguese through searching university databases and my attention was also drawn to articles and dissertations in Korean on the topic, but I had no way to access these, as they did not have English abstracts, so the

final corpus was eventually restricted to English-only publications. Nevertheless, I continue to consider the relatively large number of master's theses I found in Portuguese to be highly relevant and possibly indicative of the existence of such research in other languages, which would be fitting to the topic of a scoping review and could be valuably mapped by colleagues across the globe for their worth in picturebook choice and competence focus.

### 5.2.2 Experimental approaches to data collection

Two of the studies (S1, S4) employed quantitative data collection tools with pre- and post-testing, and when combined with more qualitative data collection methods provided both the rich description of competence development along with clear measurable data. This may seem in stark contrast to the request that teacher research be valued and disseminated – a form of research which is usually reflective and less "scientific" (Smith/Rebolledo 2018: 15). Yet, the quantitative tools used in these interventions were very suitable when a dimension of intercultural competence is prioritized over another i.e. de-centering. Replicating such tools in different contexts would also be a valuable endeavour. The more quantitative tools are brought into educational contexts, adapted and re-used by others, the more likely they will become a natural part of such research and contribute to our improved knowledge and understanding of intercultural learning through picturebooks.

### 5.2.3 Assessment of intercultural learning

Employing an experimental approach to data collection provides an evaluation of intercultural learning outcomes, to an extent. Yet assessment, which according to Byram (2021: 126) is seen as:

> [tracing] learners' progress; to identify specific strengths and weaknesses, which can be the basis for planning further teaching and learning; and to provide information in processes of evaluation of the effectiveness of a course or particular teacher or teaching technique,

was clearly not part of any of the scoping review corpus. Research into assessing intercultural learning, prompted by engaging with picturebooks, would make an important contribution to the field. The possibility of incorporating learner-centered approaches involving reflecting and reviewing (cf. Ibrahim/Alferink 2022), portfolio assessment or applying such frameworks as those developed through the Council of Europe (2018; 2021), still have to be researched in relation to intercultural learning in general, and more specifically, through picturebooks.

### 5.2.4 The five dimensions of intercultural competence

The scoping review corpus clearly demonstrated a tendency for studies to focus on the knowledge dimension of intercultural competence with some recognised development of attitude, skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovering and interaction, which

can include empathy, tolerance and respect for others, clearly targeted in some studies (e.g. S2, S4, S5). To an extent, critical cultural awareness was also evident in studies concerned with de-centering (S4, S5, S6) and challenging what is often taken for granted (S9).

On the other hand, Byram (2008) has further developed the dimension of critical cultural awareness to incorporate a more political stance, motivated by learners and their teachers' beliefs to become "proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world" (UNESCO 2014: 15). This involves moving beyond the constraints of the classroom walls to become action-oriented. As yet, there has been little research into this dimension of intercultural learning through picturebooks (for the exception, see https://icepell.eu/). This is also conspicuous in the absence of picturebooks in Category 1: Picturebooks about social issues (see 4.2.6.2).

### 5.2.5    Teacher mediation

The final gap highlights the lack of research into teacher mediation, which according to Ellis and Mourão (2021: 23) involves the "'scaffolding', given by the teacher when sharing a picturebook with a group of [learners]". It necessitates careful planning and management skills to ensure an inclusive, effective, and safe experience for learners to transact and interact in a language-rich environment. *Transaction* involves learners in thinking, reflecting, and engaging in meaningful interpretations based on their unique personal experience and background (cf. Mourão in press). *Interaction* involves learners dialogically participating in the picturebook's multimodal text, sharing critical perspectives and responding creatively together (cf. Bland 2022). Research into the training and development of teachers for mediation in a FL, as well as how teachers mediate picturebooks for intercultural learning, would contribute enormously to the field.

### 5.2.6    An intercultural picturebook canon

*Canon* means "of first class; of acknowledged relevance" (Lundin 2004: xvi) and its main function is "to position texts against each other" and "to exclude more than include" (ibid: xvii). If there is a picturebook canon for language learning, it is likely to be associated with young learners and to include *The very hungry caterpillar* (Carle 1969) and *The Gruffalo* (Donaldson/Scheffler 1999). These picturebooks represent a belief about both young learners and picturebooks which has nothing to do with intercultural learning.

Nodelman (1992: 108) encourages readers to think of the concept of canon as "a way to value some things over others" by knowing what we think is good and subsequently trying to understand why we think it is good, so that we can reach a judgement (ibid). Canon can be the choice of the individual practitioner or researcher – a choice which will depend upon their context, their learners and the learning objectives. From the medley of picturebooks used in the documents which made up this scoping review corpus, and the way they were incorporated into the studies, a manifest conclusion might be that picturebooks are

effective, but there is no canon. Nevertheless, picturebooks have been identified and in some cases repeatedly used in different studies. This repetition is relevant, for it confirms how a particular text can be effective on different levels. Nonetheless, it is important to maintain an open mind to the variety and choice that is available to teachers, for this will improve our understanding of what, where and with whom it works.

# 6    Conclusion

The potential value of picturebooks for intercultural learning in foreign language education has been hailed by advocates for some time – they recognize the opportunities picturebooks afford for language learners to engage in authentic and meaningful activities to develop intercultural competence. This scoping review aimed at determining what was known about the effectiveness of picturebooks for intercultural learning from an empirical stance, and which picturebooks were being used. The emerging evidence suggests, contrary to expectations, that picturebooks are being used across school education and into tertiary education. The review confirms that it is possible to bring this very special form of multimodal literature into the foreign language classroom to develop the attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills associated with intercultural learning. The gaps identified include the need to expand the amount of research undertaken, collate teacher research more systematically, encourage experimental approaches, focus on assessment issues, consider critical cultural awareness, examine teacher mediation and replicate and renew the picturebooks being used. Scoping reviews are often the precursor to systematic reviews, I therefore challenge colleagues to explore these themes further to warrant a systematic review of picturebooks for intercultural learning in the not too far future.

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## Appendix I: Aims or research questions for each study

| Study nº | Aim (A) or research question (RQ) | | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | To investigate the relationships among five explanatory variables of intercultural sensitivity and four literacy abilities for EFL learners | Intercultural and literacy education |
| 2 | RQ | To what extent may the picture book *The Soccer Fence* be used to promote intercultural competence in ESL students in Norway? | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| | A | To meet the needs of today's multilingual and multicultural classrooms by building bridges across languages, cultures and countries | Intercultural education |
| 4 | A | To investigate whether decentering is a learnable skill in Grade 5 of Norwegian education | Intercultural education |
| 5 | RQ | Can students learn to be consciously aware of (their own) prejudices and appreciate diversity with the help of *The Island* and associated activities? | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| 6 | A | To address religious conflicts and minority issues in an EFL secondary classroom in Israel | Intercultural education |
| 7 | A | To increase knowledge of another culture, encompassing both historical learning and understanding of social interaction and foster perspective-taking skills | Intercultural education |
| 8 | A | To delve into the teaching opportunities of storytelling and picturebooks to foster intercultural awareness and effective language learning experiences with a communicative approach | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| 9 | A | To provide opportunities to appreciate reading texts relevant to students' cultural experiences and engage in authentic conversations with and reflect on the experiences of people from another culture. | Picturebooks for intercultural education |

| 10 | A | To develop tolerance and respect for people and cultures | Intercultural education |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 11 | A | To help my students gain skills of Intercultural Competence | Intercultural education |
| 12 | A | To explore the influence of guided reading on elementary students' intercultural attitudes | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| 13 | RQ | How can literature circles promote student discussion and reflection upon intercultural and social issues in the EFL classroom? | Picturebooks for intercultural and literacy education |
| 14 | RQ | How do American teachers and Chinese EFL learners build intercultural understanding through reading and responding to children's picture books in a global book club? | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| 15 | RQ | How do English learners learn language and culture through global literature and cultural interactions about that literature? | Picturebooks for intercultural and literacy education |
| 16 | A | To examine the effectiveness of the multicultural picture books on students' awareness of cultural diversity and knowledge and understanding of own and other cultures | Picturebooks for intercultural education |
| 17 | RQ | In what ways do visual analysis and book club discussions help Korean secondary-school students of English reach an understanding of marginalized immigrant youths' experiences? | Picturebooks for intercultural education |

**Kurzbio:**

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