



**The Impact of Intercultural Communicative
Competences in a Bilingual School Environment**

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A project in cooperation with
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Abstract

The topic for the thesis was chosen based on an informative meeting with the principle at Ranum Efterskole College in the aim to oblige the school's interest in continuous development of the international program. The thesis attempts to explore the intercultural communicative competence development of young learners at the Ranum Efterskole College and discovers the learners' navigation between the different cultures that the learners meet during their stay by answering the problem formulation and research question "To what extend do learners develop intercultural communicative competences in a bilingual environment and how do they navigate between multiple cultures?". This investigation has been implemented through an analysis and supported by the methodological design. The research has been carried out within the qualitative research design which has followed a triangulation of data collection. The three types of data collection consisting of observation, focus group and individual interviews have supported the structure of the analysis, which has been divided into three parts to be able to analyse each data set thoughtfully. In addition, the analysis has been supported by secondary literature within the intercultural communication field in order to strengthen the researcher's statements. The theoretical framework attempts to look at the intercultural communicative competences that the learners are expected to develop to a certain extent. This theoretical framework is based on Iben Jensen's intercultural communication theory and Michael Byram's intercultural competences theory. Together these theories build the intercultural communicative competences which is a new interpretation of Michael Byram's intercultural communicative competence in language learning. The intercultural aspect of communication and competence improvement follows the analysis to describe the experiences and impacts of the learners with the aim to get a deeper understanding of the process of intercultural relations among young people. The focus stays on observing and interviewing the learners to get a group and individual view of their experiences in order to support the school's development in the international department. The experiences of the learners have the aim to investigate the feelings, wishes and worries that they have when staying at REC as well as to understand how the school can adjust the program to these emotions and expectations. The observations and interviews have shown, that the school should focus even more on the intercultural offers by activities and travels because this is what the learners are mostly interested in when applying for Ranum Efterskole College. The educational program has a diverse interest among the learners why the school should offer as many opportunities as possible for the learners to combine a schedule that fits with their academic level and wishes. Lastly, the social

opportunities should be continued since this is what the school promises and the learners expect from their stay.

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1 Introduction

Individuals are embossed by the heterogeneity of today's society. Both individuals and whole societies need a certain tolerance for cultural diversity to interact with each other, since diversity or heterogeneity as a topic has gained relevance in different classifications in society, especially in the approach of the labour market's development among organisations (Buche et al., 2013, p. 483-484). Educational institutions are working on equipping their learners for the labour market and higher education, while each school finds its own approach of school management (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2001, p. 14). Especially learning about the cross-cultural differences is important when communicating interculturally to avoid misunderstandings (Chen, 2017, p. 167). Whereas the heterogeneity in societies is as well exposed from conflicts as:

"The same structural conditions that make cordial intergroup relations more likely make interpersonal conflict between members of different groups more likely. For conditions that increase the probability of social contact increase the likelihood of overt interpersonal conflict as well as that of harmonious social associations, since both depend on opportunities for social contact. Strangely, therefore, the very conditions that foster the social integration of various groups and strata into a coherent social structure simultaneously precipitate frequent interpersonal conflicts among their members" (Blau, 1977, p. 113)

The environment in educational institutions might create these certain types of dilemma when gathering young learners in one location, in particular diverse cultural identities, to create an intercultural communication besides the learning (Gojkov, 2011, p. 89). To reach this diverse type of communication the dilemma of interpersonal conflict is a risk that must be taken (Blau, 1977, p. 113-114). The intercultural communicative competence is discussed in several theories, where one of them is by Michael Byram (1997), which will be clarified in further processes of this research. "Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence, but a positioning" (Hall, 1990, p. 226). Cultural communication is seen in different environments, where an international school matches the expectations to learn about culture, while the young learners' identity develops (Plum, 2008, p. 29; Gauvain, 2005, p. 12).

"From a sociocultural perspective, cognitive development is the process by which the child's emerging maturational capabilities interact with the cultural context of development as it is instantiated in social experience. The outcome of this dynamic

process is a mature individual in whom the culturally specific nature of experience is an integral part of what and how the person thinks” (Gauvain, 2005, p. 12).

An example for an international school with learners, who are expected to develop their intercultural communicative competences, is the international residential school, Ranum Efterskole College (REC). The everyday at this school involves communication among cultures since the learners at the school come from several countries. The school’s current project is to develop a *foundation year* for learners that usually cannot continue their education in Denmark. The foundation year is specially for Asian learners that will be prepared for the final examination in Denmark in order to introduce them in the Danish education system instead of going back to their home countries. One of REC’s philosophies is to “get out in the world and get the world to Ranum” (Olav Storm, Principle at Ranum Efterskole College). The international learners need certain points in the final examination to continue their education in Denmark, which is one of the goals the school would like to prepare them for. When international learners are being mixed with Danish learners in the rooms it gives both of them a cultural experience and knowledge that they would not get anywhere else. This experience is important to avoid racism and embrace cultural exchanges among young people. After a foundation year at REC the international learners should be prepared with social skills in a community. This is an important part to get ready for high school or college in Denmark, because the community is connected with education about society. An “efterskole” is obliged to give individuals ethical, cultural and political education that prepares the individual for society (Komischke-Konnerup, 2012, p. 23). REC is focussed on giving a global perspective to the learners by expecting the learners to interact and exchange their cultural knowledge with each other. This leads to the Research Question asking about the learners’ intercultural communicative competences and the navigation between multiple cultures:

1.1 Problem formulation and research question

To what extend do learners develop intercultural communicative competences in a bilingual environment and how do they navigate between multiple cultures?

One of the aims of this study is to explore the school’s learners interactions to maintain observation that has potential to be used as evidence for teachers and the leadership department to obtain a better understanding of the learners’ realities and needs. As well it should strengthen the navigation between

cultural and communicative processes in the school's community by accomplishing a research that can add value to the school's different departments. Besides, the project is not a request for the school to make changes, instead it has the aim to give understanding about the school's units. This allows me to work with the school's environmental processes in order to get a better insight about practical arrangements. In order to answer the research question, it is important to understand that the development of the learners is connected to their navigation between the cultures, because without their navigation between the multiple cultures they will not achieve intercultural communicative competences, since they need cultural diversity for this.

The methodology will consist of an introduction about the targeted school Ranum Efterskole College, where after the methodological framework and its research strategy will be clarified. The observation will be conducted in the same time as the interviews to give a better overview of the timeline. The theory is decided on after the data collection, but in the inspiration to work within a theory of intercultural communicative competences, the research question includes a theoretical approach. After the data collection the other theories will be adjusted based on the topics found in the data. The interest for the main topic about learners navigation in an international environment and the interaction among cultures was inspired by a work experience about the development of youth education around Europe. Where the focus on cultural exchange made me curious about exchange opportunities in Denmark which led me to REC. In a meeting with the Principle of REC, we decided on a research area that could benefit this thesis and the school's development. Before starting with the data collection I studied the philosophy of REC and the educational idea of *efterskole in society* to get a whole picture on how to approach the efterskole environment within the understanding of cultures.

2 Methodology

This part is presenting the methodological preconditions in regards to answer the research question. The methodological framework will be prepared with the considerations on interpretivism together with a suitable data collection and research strategy.

2.1 Introducing Ranum Efterskole College

The research question concerns learners at Ranum Efterskole College learning about the interaction in an international environment, while the interest in the research derives from the work done in an internship, where the tasks were about gathering individuals from different cultures to learn from and about each other. This idea was explored further to the context of international education in Denmark, which opened the opportunity to work on a research at Ranum Efterskole College as a Danish and International Residential School located in Northern Jutland in Denmark.

Ranum Efterskole College offers a broad learning program from Danish efterskole education to internationally certified examination such as the Cambridge International School, where the school has classes on different levels: IGCSE, AS and A levels. The school has 450 learners from 28 different countries and 101 staff members from 11 different countries (Olav Storm, Principle at Ranum Efterskole College). The school's approaches are connected to global topics and the spirit of an open-minded community.

The school's logo is "the tree of culture" which symbolises the diversity of the school's community. "The tree symbolises the diversity and the broadness of the school. The root and the trunk symbolises the diversity of the community, whilst the circle symbolises the global" (Ranum Efterskole College (a), 2014). The learners have to respect each other's cultural diversity and learn from each other.

"Global Learning and Beyond" is the school's slogan, which underlies the philosophies of "Inclusive Community and Learning" and "Participatory Democracy" (ibid.). Both are reflecting the approach to global society and the tolerance it needs to combine cultures in one place. Learners are included in the decisions about extra-curricular subjects and activities and they can be involved in the planning process for travels or activities. For the research the global society of the school is the basis for the present study and the limited observations.

2.2 The methodological framework

This section explains the epistemological position of interpretivism, which will function as the overall perspective for the research, while the ontological considerations of hermeneutic and social constructionism presume the approach of social interactions of observed participants. The framework will be followed by the research strategy of a qualitative research to explain the decisions of data collection and processes.

2.2.1 Interpretivism

The epistemological position describes “[...] what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (Bryman, 2016, p. 24). This research takes the view of interpretivism, which contrasts positivism and is central to this research and its problem formulation, because it allows the interpretation of social realities: “It is founded upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (ibid., p. 26). Interpretivism seeks for understanding of identities, ideas and culture in international relations, which has influence in regards to the answers of participants in interviews (Lamont, 2015, p. 19). The correlation between interpretivism and hermeneutics will provide the research with an in-depth analysis of understanding. Interpretivism’s heritage appears in Max Weber’s (1864-1920) approach to *Verstehen* which translated from German means understand, but he embraces both explanation and understanding (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). The understanding of social actions and interactions has important value to this study, because one of the aims is to explore the learners’ interactions to be able to make suggestions on possible solutions.

2.2.2 Hermeneutics

To answer the problem formulation, the perception of the topic must be considered such in an ontological method and epistemological position. The ontological method helps to indicate if the social entity has a reality external from social actors or is constructed on the actions of social actors (ibid., p. 28). Since this research does include the social actors and researches their culture, this study is indicated by the ontological method of social constructivism. Though another method the hermeneutics supports partly the view of interpretivism by emphasizing the understanding of human behaviour as well as the explanation (ibid., p. 26).

From the ontological method the data will be approached with hermeneutics, because the relation between data and theory in this study relies on the interpretation and (pre-)understanding of the

content (Christensen, 1994, p. 26). Hermeneutics means “methodology of interpretation” and is the art of interpretation with the function to interpret text material such as the transcribed interviews and articles (Berg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 218).

The method is characterized by two approaches as methodological and ontological. The hermeneutics’ methodological approach was established by Wilhelm Dilthey with the theory to separate the scientific *explain* from the humanities *understand*, which was inspired by Friedrich Schleiermacher’s early hermeneutic method for the adaption of texts and the theory about human understanding (Nünning, 2013, p. 298), while the ontological approach appears with Martin Heidegger’s presentation of understanding being seen as a constitutive for human appearance (Berg-Sørensen, 2013, p. 220). Heidegger’s ontological method was established in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) where he presents *understanding* as the primary manner of being-in-the-world; the idea is that the understanding of a situation is based on the pre-understanding of an individual’s life world (Christensen, 1994, p. 27). The understanding used from Heidegger’s idea is a circle of contextual understanding within the investigated phenomenon (Nünning, 2013, p. 298).

This study uses the circle of interpretation and pre-understanding to obtain a complete understanding of the data’s content with a pre-understanding of intercultural communication based on personal experiences and earlier projects. As mentioned above, before the research started I had a meeting with the Principle of REC to agree on a topic, which has been an additional benefit to the pre-understanding. Since the hermeneutics operate with interpretations and understanding of text material, I choose to see the research from the epistemological position of interpretivism, because hermeneutics and interpretivism are closely related.

2.2.3 Social constructivism

The social constructionism and social constructivism are parallel versions in the term of constructivism; they are the perception of human life in a social constructed reality (Nepper Larsen & Kryger Pedersen, 2011, p. 631). According to Finn Collin, the social constructivism can be divided into epistemological and ontological constructivism (Collin, 2014, 422-424). Where Bryman explains the constructivism as the ontological position “that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). In the aspect of the actors in the construction of social realities meanings “[...] categories such as organizations and culture are pre-given and therefore confront social actors as external realities [...]” (Bryman, 2012, p.33).

Therefore, the social phenomena is always in a constant state of revision, because the researcher presents the version of social reality that is constructed by the researchers own perception of the social world (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). In this research about REC's learners, the social world is constructed by these learners as actors and the researcher's understanding of the learners' action between the different cultures:

“[...] people create culture continuously. (...) No set of cultural understandings (...) provides a perfectly applicable solution to any problem people have to solve in the course of their day, and they therefore must remake those solutions, adapt their understandings to the new situation in the light of what is different about it” (Becker, 1982, p. 521).

The research question will be answered within the ontological understanding of social constructivism by methods of data collection. The importance for this perspectives lays in the participants' construction of their social world and the meanings of rich explanations of a topic (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 3).

2.3 Research Strategy

Regarding the research question and the interpretivism view, this study's research procedure does include qualitative data to answer it, because “qualitative methods is meant here to describe the diverse set of tools and resources that we can draw upon to collect and analyse data that comes in the form of the spoken or written language and is not formalized into numbers” (Lamont, 2015, p. 78). Therefore, this strategy processes qualitative data by describing and understanding the statements and observations of the learners which cannot be measured through quantification (Bryman, 2016, p. 33). Qualitative data embody a broad size range of empirical material such as different types of interviews, observations and field notes, pictures, videos and life stories as well as documentary materials from journals or diaries (Nepper Larsen & Kryger Pedersen, 2011, p. 353). Another approach could have been quantitative or mixed method research; quantitative data consist of measurable data which can be collected by questionnaires and statistic results, while the mixed method approach uses both qualitative and quantitative data to analyse (ibid., p. 353-354). This study will practice data collection from semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, field notes from observations and articles within the efterskole universe. Since this research has the aim to understand the communicative processes and the daily life of young learners, using several techniques of qualitative data collection felt as a relevant strategy for answering the problem formulation. It was important that I would not

just rely on interview data, but back up the statements of the interviews with observations and secondary literature such as peer-reviewed articles and theoretical books to create a “triangulation [to prove] an effective strategy in assessing the validity of my interview data” (Lamont, 2015, p. 79). The project’s main focus is the qualitative approach and can be visualized by Figure 17.1 “An outline of the main steps of qualitative research” by Bryman in *Social Research Methods* (2016, p. 379):

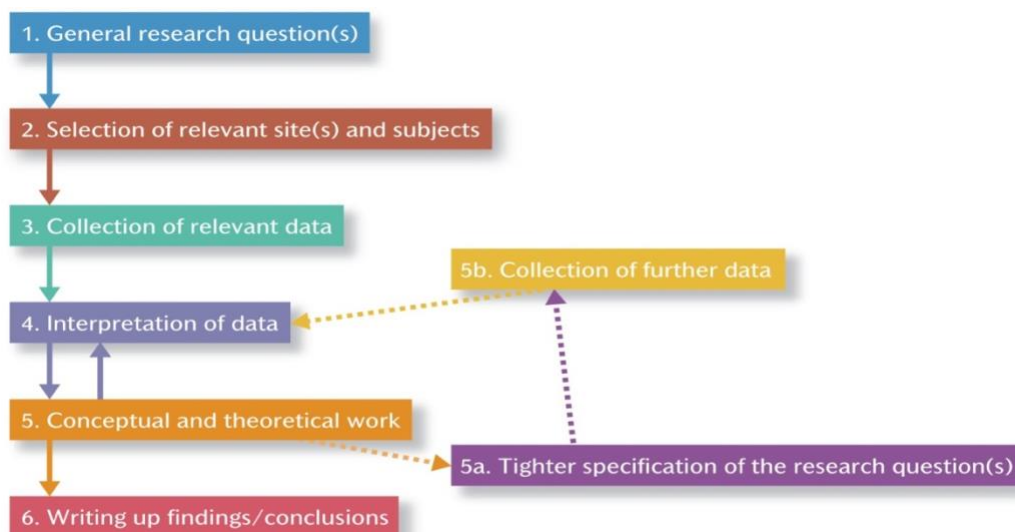


Figure 1: (Bryman, 2016, p. 379)

Following these steps the procedure is likewise the inductive and iterative approach – working inductively signifies starting with the data collection and adapting a theoretical approach to the data, whereas the iterative approach means going back and forth between data and theory (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). This study’s relationship between data and theory appears in an iterative approach starting inductively. By the time the research question was accomplished, step two in Figure 17.1 (ibid., p. 379), the data collection techniques were decided after the first theory was chosen. In the process the iterative approach became more adjustable than the inductive, which gave the interpretation of data an important freedom.

2.4 Data collection

For the methodological approach the collection techniques used are relevant to the ethnographic research: “It is possible that the term ‘ethnographer’ is sometimes preferred because ‘participant observation’ seems to imply just observation, though in practice participant observers do more than just observe. Typically, participant observers and ethnographers will gather further data through interviews and the collection of documents” (Bryman, 2016, p. 423).

The data collection is carried out through an ethnographic method that has involved the researcher throughout the everyday of young learners at Ranum Efterskole College, which is the place where all data collection has been taken place. The REC has with its international environment been the right place to investigate in the light of answering the research question. The school has provided me with beneficial material about the theoretical approaches of the Danish efterskole (boarding school) in society. Beyond the focus on the boarding school's environment, one of the most important topics where the social interactions between the learners from several cultures gathered in the school activities. For further data collection, interviews have been supporting data to get a deeper understanding of the participative individuals.

2.4.1 Observation in an ethnographic research

The ethnographical observation was for the overall research the most suitable position to take, because in the beginning of the data collection the participants did not know about me being at the school. The school has visitors every now and then which made it easier to blend in. It was not possible to hide my role as observer, but from the moment they knew that the observations were for my education it was no problem and they offered me to ask questions whenever I needed to. The registration technique can vary from scheduled topics for quantitative research to more informal registration techniques. There is a difference between indirect and direct which can belong to a passive or participatory observation (Nepper Larsen & Kryger Pedersen, 2011, p. 466). This study used the participant observation which is just another term for ethnography (Bryman, 2016, p. 432). The participant observation is a method that allows the researcher to participate in the participants cultural and social practices to get an insight into their picture of the world (Nepper Larsen & Kryger Pedersen, 2011, p. 110). The relation between the researcher and the participants was depending on the position of the researcher, which in this study participatory observation since it was not full observation or full participation, but it was participation while observing – the full observation relies on hidden observation and no interaction with participants, while full participation is just participating with an hidden identity (ibid.). The method gave access to participate whenever there was an activity to participate in a similar role as the teachers, which made the participants respect me likewise a teacher, but at the same time they connected with me quickly. They identified my project similarly with their homework. The observations could take part during participation. The participants were aware of my existence, but it was easier to hide my actual research interest of their intercultural communication competences and navigation between multiple cultures, when telling that my

presence was for an educational project. After collecting the first observations, the data led my research to focus more on intercultural questions when having conversations with participants. The following topics appeared from observed settings while observing the participants and helped to create questions for the interview guide with the aim to get answers regarding these topics:

- Motivation
- Expectations
- Social life
- Interaction
- Contribution
- Benefits

The topics are as well used to structure the analysis of the both interview types, while the structure of the observation additionally had the topic of grouping nationalities. When conducting the interviews I started with the focus group which after a reflection about the overall interaction led me to four semi-structured interviews, because it was not possible to make the international participants take active part in the focus group. The following schedule gives an overview of the attending participants:

Focus group interview (Appendix C):

Participant	Age	School programme	Home country
Tobias	16	IGCSE	Denmark
Zander	16	IGCSE	Denmark
Asker	17	IGCSE	United Kingdom and Denmark
Valentina	16	IGCSE	Mexico
Prim	16	IGCSE	Thailand
Emma	15	Danish 9 th grade	Denmark
Maja	16	IGCSE	Denmark
Ricarda	16	IGCSE	Denmark

Semi-structured interview (Appendix D; Appendix E; Appendix F; Appendix G):

Participant	Age	School programme	Home country
Victor	17	IGCSE	Mexico
Faria	17	IGCSE	Thailand and Malaysia
Valentina	16	IGCSE	Mexico
Hanna	15	IGCSE and Danish 9 th grade exams	Born in Mexico Danish parents

2.4.2 Focus group interview

For the data collection, the first decision fell on a focus group interview that came along with the research question. In the research question the topic of navigation between multiple cultures appears which belongs to the research category of group dynamics. To get an insight of the group dynamic between the roommates as well as different point of view about the stay at Ranum Efterskole College, the focus group interview felt relevant. The earliest work that includes focus groups has been published by Robert Merton, who examined the persuasiveness of wartime propaganda efforts using focus groups (Morgan, 1988, p. 11). According to David L. Morgan focus group interviews can be formal or informal interviews with a group, where the participants have the opportunity to discuss their thoughts with each other while the facilitator observes and leads the conversation (Morgan, 1997, p. 15). The ideal focus group contains six to ten individuals stated by the facilitator, who does not determine the interview, but does support the conversation with questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 170). The idea for the focus group interview in this study was to gather individuals with a certain experience on the research topic and conduct an interview with a partly unstructured method (Bryman, 2016, p. 501).

Focus groups can be useful for both self-contained means or supplementing data for either quantitative or qualitative research, because focus groups can be valuable combined with other data (Morgan, 1988, p. 10). Since this study explores the experiences of learners at REC, the focus group interview can be of value combined with the ethnographical data. David L. Morgan explains that the focus groups are useful for:

- Orienting oneself to a new field;
- Generating hypotheses based on informants' insights;
- Evaluating different research sites or study populations;
- Developing interview schedules and questionnaires;

Getting participants' interpretations of results from earlier studies (Morgan, 1988, p. 11).

This research mainly uses the focus group for “evaluating different research sites” of REC. The group is a supplement to the previous and later data collection that is conducted during the research. The interview guide with questions and topics was almost the same for the focus group and individual interviews with the only difference that the focus group has necessary regulations, which is explained further in part 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2 *Interview guide* below.

2.4.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages

The advantages and disadvantages of the focus group have different influence on the process.

A practical advantage by using this technique is the uncomplicated set-up, because it can be done almost everywhere, it does not take a lot of time and is cooperative with other methods (Morgan, 1988, p. 20). The explorative approach in the method gives the researcher an opportunity to get an overview of the research area as well as the groups interaction which can be an advantage when observing how the groups are interacting with each other and the topics that they have a conversation about (ibid., p. 21). Disadvantages reflect in situations when the focus group is outside its comfort zone which easily happens in the setting of an interview. This can give an uncertainty of the accuracy in the participants' answers (ibid., p. 20-21). Likewise it can be a disadvantage to have less control as a facilitator, because in worst case individuals will try to hide behind other participants, which would only let one part of the group speak (ibid.). In this case, the researcher needs to find other techniques to collect data from relevant respondents.

The idea to have a focus group interview was to mix the nationalities as much as possible, but it turned out, that Danish participants were speaking more freely and open up about involving their thoughts. The international participants from Thailand, Mexico and United Kingdom were not answering or commenting the questions. Due to the lack of time I needed to consider a new strategy to collect data, which led me to make individual semi-structured interviews and resulted in making the international participants confident to speak. Another disadvantage worth to mention is the selected participants, because when starting the research at REC I was introduced to the responsible person of all the rooms. He gave me room numbers with high international rate, because it was important to make the focus group interview with a girls and a boys room to get an insight into the social life of different rooms. The semi-structured interviews were then conducted with two

individuals from other rooms, which were advised to me by a teacher who told me about learners with a confident personality, because I was missing the perspective of international learners at the school.

2.4.2.2 Interview guide

To better understand the approaches that are used in the study to collect relevant data, the interview guide (Appendix A) will be explained with its questions and topics in the following section. After describing the participants for what purpose the study is, the interview was introduced with a short conversation about anonymity. The participants of the focus group explained that they do interviews all the time and that I am welcome to use their real names. Regarding ethical standards that I decided on beforehand, I choose to give them fake names. I clarified some regulations and asked for recording permission. After the interview I was allowed to take a group picture, which is showed on the front page.

The following regulations are based on ethical considerations in respect to the participants:

- Respect each other's opinions
- Only one person at the time can speak
- Do not have other conversations than the current of the interview
- Speak loud and clear

The questions created based on observations outcomes:

How old are you?

Where are you from?

Could you tell me briefly which countries you have visited or lived in and how long?

What was your motivation to study at Ranum Efterskole College and why did you choose it?

What do you expect from your education at Ranum Efterskole College?

How do you think and feel about the social life?

Have you participated in any projects related to the school and how was the teamwork? Could you give examples?

What can you contribute with during your stay?

What benefits do you get from staying at the school?

The following topics appeared after reading the interview, which led to these topics that will structure the analysis of the focus group interview:

Motivation

Comfort

Activities

Social skills

Independence

These questions and topics have been a helpful tool, though the interview also included spontaneous questions related to the conversation to get deeper explanation from the participants, which gives a better understanding of their answers. The interview took place in the room of the female participants, because the school has a schedule with quiet hours, where learners usually have to stay in their rooms. Therefore, they invited me to come in the quiet hour.

2.4.3 Semi-structured interview

Another interview method used to get more knowledge about the international learners was to have individual conversations hold as qualitative research interviews, where “[...] the knowledge is produced in social interaction between the interviewer and the respondent” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 100). The interview method gives the opportunity to get an insight of the respondents life and navigation between multiple cultures. The following part enlightens the decisions and considerations that were made before the interviews to ensure that the data will have qualitative value.

Bryman explains that “qualitative interviewing tends to be much less structured than interviewing in quantitative research” (Bryman, 2016, p. 466). The structure for this study’s individual interviews is semi-structured, which constitutes an interview guide with prepared topics, but it allows to add questions during the interview or leave questions out depending on where the conversation leads (ibid., p. 468). Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann introduce the qualitative research interview in *InterView – Introduction to a craft* (2008) as “a social practice [...] and as a pure and true interaction of human relation” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 35). Additional questions during the conversation enable to obtain a deeper understanding, because the questions can bring out more knowledge about the respondents’ perception of the topic. Especially for the individual semi-structured interviews it is important to take into consideration that the respondents are from other cultures than the researcher, which can involve other norms in the interaction such as immediacy, form of questioning or body

language (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 164). Two of the interviews were conducted in February short time after the focus group and two interviews were conducted in May, to make sure, that the research is as detailed as possible. The interviews in May were done exactly with the same method as the two interviews in February.

2.4.3.1 Limitations of intercultural interviewing

Before starting the semi-structured interview as well as the focus group interview, I did some considerations regarding interacting with individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural interview outcomes can be influenced by several elements such as the setting and execution of the interview or facial expressions and gestures of the researcher (Keats, 2000, p. 128-129). Daphne M. Keats indicates that “[...] we need to be aware of, and adhere to the politeness norms of our own society. Equally, when interviewing a person from a different culture, we would want to observe the politeness norms of that culture” (ibid., p.130). In worst case, the participant could feel embarrassed or offended, when the cultural differences are not considered. The same way the gender can become an issue, when gender role expectations are not respected in a certain amount (ibid., p. 134). In this research the biggest concern was the politeness norms with Asian participants, because I had a certain pre-understanding of Asian politeness.

2.4.3.2 Interview guide

The interview guide for the semi-structured interview was involving the same questions and topics as for the focus group interview. The introduction to the interview was a bit different though, because I did not need to clarify the regulations since they were unnecessary for an individual conversation. The semi-structured interview does, as explained above, allow to adjust questions or leave some out when not relevant in the conversation. After a short description of the study and an introduction of myself, the interview process was clarified regarding wished anonymity and the recording being helpful for the transcription but will be deleted after transcribing the interview. The four interviews are conducted based on the following questions and topics;

The questions feature several topic areas:

How old are you?

Where are you from?

Could you tell me briefly which countries you have visited or lived in and how long?

What was your motivation to study at Ranum Efterskole College and why did you choose it?

What do you expect from your education at Ranum Efterskole College?

How do you think and feel about the social life?

Have you participated in any projects related to the school and how was the teamwork? Could you give examples?

What can you contribute with during your stay?

What benefits do you get from staying at the school?

The following topics appeared after reading the interviews, which led to these topics that will structure the analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews:

Motivation

Comfort

Activities

Social skills

Independence

Again these questions and topics have been supporting to my interview conduction and will support the analysis structure. The topics have been relevant for both interviews and the observations during the stay at Ranum Efterskole College when I collected the data.

2.5 Data processing

The collected data will be processed in the analysis where the observations, interviews and focus group will be examined with the support of secondary literature that has been found in regards to the theory. The examination of the learners' development in intercultural communicative competences has an important impact on the results, why it has been of importance to conduct interviews with national and international participants in comparison to the explored settings as a participatory observer. This means that the content of the analysis is not only based on the collected data and adjusted theory, but it includes material that the school has given to me and material which has been found on the school's website. The material can include further descriptions on practicalities of the school as well as schedules and calendars of the school's activity program. Furthermore, the school gave me material about boarding schools in the Danish society, which has been used rarely to get a deeper understanding of the environment. The main material is however the collected data and will

be in focus of the analysis, which means that all material used beyond the collected data has only been adjusted for the support of statements and suggestions.

2.6 Quality criteria of data

The quality criteria for qualitative research will reflect the validity and reliability that is considered as external, because internal validity and reliability are to be discussed in groups of researchers (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). Since the research exclusively uses the qualitative strategy, there cannot be drawn generalisations from the results. Other important and necessary considerations will be pointed in the section of ethics and limitations of the study.

2.6.1 Validity

The data collected from observations and interviews are relevant for answering to what extent learners need to develop intercultural communicative competences and what the responses show. “The validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). When using the term validity it is equally with the transferability of trustworthiness and involves the encouragement “[...] to produce what Geertz calls thick description – that is, rich accounts of the details of a culture” (ibid., p. 384). The validity has to make sure that the data is trustworthy and discovers the data’s quality. The interviews are conducted with the learners directly where the researcher has no other choice than believing that they tell the truth about themselves. The study is implemented by one researcher, the internal validity does not have any relevance and the validity has to focus on the external validity (ibid.). The external validity refers to what extend finding can be generalized across social settings (ibid.). In this study, the findings cannot be generalized because every individual has a different academic profile at REC, which from the beginning made it difficult to find participants from as many different countries as possible.

2.6.2 Reliability

Dependability in the qualitative study is assessing trustworthiness and is equivalent with reliability and to what extend the research is replicable (ibid.). However, in this study I will refer to it as reliability which is depending on the careful observations and selection of participants, because the environment reflects similar situations day by day, but the participants for interviews can vary in their personality and hereby what they would answer. Therefore it would be very important to interview the same individuals when repeating the research. The external reliability in qualitative research is difficult though, because “it is impossible to ‘freeze’ a social setting” (Bryman, 2016, p. 383). That

would in other words mean the setting is always changing. In order to repeat the same research in ethnographic research as this one the researcher has to take the same social role (ibid., p. 383-384). Since this research has one researcher, the internal reliability has no relevance to the study. The qualitative research approach makes the reliability depend on the careful selection of participants that are used to ensure that the data can be consistent with the observations (ibid., p. 384). If the research needed to be repeated, the research needed to be done within the same school year and even then, the participants have obtained new knowledge and developed their personality.

2.6.3 Generalizations

Generalization is “a concern with the external validity of findings” (Bryman, 2016, p. 691). Generalizing means to draw conclusions from measurable data. Due to the fact that this study only includes qualitative data it is not possible to generalize on the results. The data contents observations and interviews, which can just be evaluated on the answers and notes, but there has not been any counting in the data collection. The only settings needed to be mentioned are conversations with teachers, who unintentionally draw conclusions and generalizations on the behaviour of their students, who in this research are referred to as learners.

2.6.4 Ethics

The ethical considerations about the data collection were made in this research and have involved the protection of participants’ identity and the participatory observations. The ethical decision-making for the research has been experienced as “a certain amount of flexibility” (Bryman, 2016, p.124) from the moment of meeting the participants.

The participatory observation was implemented carefully, since it was an invasion of the learners’ privacy, because I uncovered my role only in settings where it was necessary. Within the time that the research was conducted in most learners knew about my existence. In settings such as free time activities I did uncover my role while in settings in the corridors they saw me as a new teacher, which was an advantage in the settings of voluntary tasks, but was uncovered to avoid confusions among the learners. It could have been used to cover the role, but that would have been deception (ibid., p. 133). The research has not been involved by deception, since every time it was necessary to uncover the role as a participatory observer, the aim for the research was explained as being for a master thesis project which in no way has been presented as something else.

Before interviews, the aim of my work was explained thoughtfully, this gave me an advantage of sympathy from the learners, because they understand the engagement to school work. Each interview was started with a clear understanding of not causing harm to participants by clarifying about the offer anonymity. However, anonymity was not wished by any of the participants and therefore the names have just been changed lightly. They were as well enlightened about the agreement, that I made with the school about handing in this study to the school for improving reasons.

2.6.5 Limitations

The limitations are enlightening what other options would have been the ideal for a proper research. As the first limitation that I met, the literature is not only in English, but was as well found in Danish and German. For me as a bilingual researcher this was not an obstacle, but translating a text from one language into another might cause unwelcoming changes. The translation has been performed with a word to word technique in order to avoid too many changes in the text.

Another limitation has appeared with the data collection, since most of the data collection has been conducted in February the research can only show the development that the learners are telling about after a half school year. Two individual interviews were conducted in May, because it was difficult to find participants. During the time from February to May I was in contact with one teacher, who supported my selection of participants in order to find international learners with an interesting background. These two interviews in May gave the data of individual interviews more strength, but also it was a risk for the data to become too different, because the learners might have developed even further than in February. The optimal research would have been implemented from the beginning of the school year and at least 6 months forward to see how the learners are showing development of the target competences. Making the research in a winter month does as well limit the insight of observations regarding the activities likewise only seeing the learners at the school and not on one of the travels. The perspective that this research gave on the participants has therefore been limited in many different perspectives.

3 Theory

The following section will introduce theories used in order to understand the outcomes of the collected data and to answer the research question about individuals' intercultural communicative competences and their navigation between several cultures in culture and language oriented settings. The applied theories have been chosen on the basis of the school's interest in this research which has the aim to benefit the school's communication and activities among learners and teachers. Intercultural communication describes the elements of communication that participants have between each other (Jensen, 2007, p. 35). Therefore, the theoretical framework is built around intercultural communication combined with intercultural competences as the theoretical understanding of foreign language and culture learning (Byram, 1997, p. 3). All in all, the theories support the analysis to understand the international and bilingual environment of REC and how the learners perceive their stay.

3.1 Intercultural communication

The research started with a theoretical focus on intercultural communication in the problem formulation, when aiming to what extend learners develop intercultural communicative competences in their environment: "It involves verbal and non-verbal communication as well as written and possibly other means of expression" (Plum, 2008, p. 29). When explaining the theory of intercultural communication, it is necessary to understand culture and communication in their conceptual understandings (Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 13). The data for this research have been conducted by observing and interviewing members of the target environment. Additionally, the theory will be used to give expression to the results and arguments to find a clearer understanding of the communication, culture and competences of the learners. Therefore, the understanding of culture and communication for this study will be explained in the parts below followed by intercultural communication.

3.1.1 Culture

The short version to describe the concept of culture has diverse meanings, because it describes not only the nationality of one, but also it can refer to high culture i.e. theatre (Jensen, 2007, p. 17). It can as well as mean lifestyle culture which is mostly labelled as subculture (ibid). Culture can give meaning to individuals throughout their everyday and explains their behaviour, which is why the interviews in this research had to be carried out carefully in respect to other cultures norms and behaviour patterns.

According to Iben Jensen, culture can be approached differently (Jensen, 2007, p. 22). Culture is more complex than the previous description, because the concept cannot be defined as stable, since culture is always changing, being re-interpreted by the actors in a society, created between individuals, and based on their behaviour (ibid., p. 21). Culture is not reliant on borders as Wolfgang Welsch describes: “Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other” (Welsch, 1999).

To understand culture the researcher should not assume, but instead observe and analyse; when researching culture the question is rather to approach the concept of culture complex or descriptive, because the approach influences the research techniques in order to analyse the right interest (Jensen, 2007, p. 22). The complex concept suggests questionnaires while the descriptive concept suggests fieldwork and interviews (ibid.). As an interpretivist the research strategy has already been set to find the understanding and meaning in the research material, which is the reason to follow the suggestions of the descriptive concept of culture, when approaching culture in this study. Likewise, the concept of communication has its own approach in this study.

3.1.2 Communication

The theory of classic communication reflects the action of a *sender* giving a *message* to the *receiver* (ibid., p. 27). The simple model of sender, message and receiver is how every communication has to be built up to communicate information between two parts. The complexity of communication comes with the aspects beyond the simple sender, message and receiver model. According to Friedemann Schulz von Thun, the four sides model is an example on how communication has more elements than the action of communicating (Schulz von Thun, 2001, p. 26):

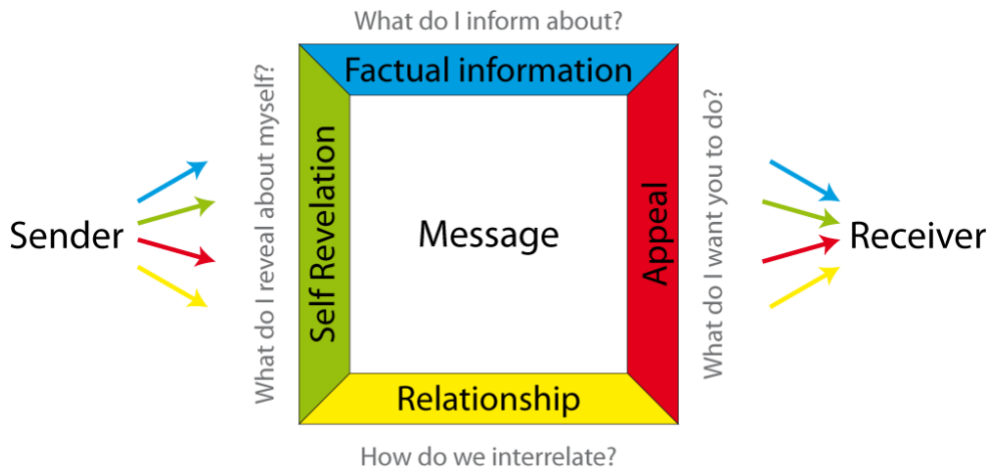


Figure 2: (Ranftler, 2016).

The four sides model has four aspects of communication to approach between the sender and the receiver. This communication model expresses how communication in this study is perceived. They reveal the feelings, relationship and information between the sender and the receiver (Schulz von Thun, 2001, p. 26). The aspect of factual information is about the message's focus point the information that the sender wants to arrive at the receiver (Schulz von Thun, 2001, p. 26). The information is not the only element of a message, because the sender reveals his personality when formulating a message. The sender reveals and sometimes hides pieces of his person, that the receiver can assume from the self-revelation which is readable in the message (Schulz von Thun, 2001, p. 27). The relationship between the sender and the receiver can be visible in the way they formulate the message i.e. friendly, aggressive etc. (Schulz von Thun, 2001, 28). Friedemann Schulz von Thun explains the relationship aspect in communication with the words that every communication between a sender and a receiver implies a type of relationship (ibid.). The fourth side of this communication model is the appeal which has the function for the message to have influence on the receiver and can manipulate the receiver (Schulz von Thun, 2001, p. 29). In other words, the appeal has the function to make the receiver think in a certain way. The four sides show how much the sender can have an influence on the receiver when formulating a message, which can make the message even harder to understand when the sender and receiver have different cultural backgrounds. The communication in this research has to find an understanding in the participants' answers by interpretation and what their information to the researcher is.

3.1.3 Intercultural communication

The term intercultural communication is often related to complications in communication (Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 13), since it is about “the practical aspects of culture; that is, everything that the people at a cross-cultural meeting do in different ways” (Plum, 2008, p. 29). In theory, the REC is an international boarding school and it is expected that learners interact with each other to a certain extent, because their environment only works when everyone accepts and adapts to the cultural diversity (Appendix B). Intercultural communication can have a broad diversity in definition: “In its simplest form, intercultural communication takes place when two or more people who see themselves as members of different cultures communicate in writing or orally” (Jensen, 2007, p. 35).

To explain the single elements of communication such as social diversity, power relations, language and the actual context (Jensen, 2007, p. 35; Plum, 2008, p. 29), they appear similarly to the four sides model (Schulz von Thun, 2001). The intercultural research gives diverse possibilities to approach intercultural communication, as in this research the interpretative view is a basis of the interpretive, critical tradition of intercultural research (Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 15) will follow the analysis. This tradition has among others obtained importance to the intercultural field with Clifford Geertz’s work on essays in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973; Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 28). The other cultural concept in intercultural communication is the functional concept, which is based on Auguste Comte’s positivist idea and quantitative research material (Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 18). Geertz’s understanding of culture criticizes the functional cultural concept (Geertz, 1973, p. 10-11; Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 28). To understand the interpretive, critical tradition it has to be understood that it does not see “[...] culture as determining for communication, but more seen at stake between culture, communication and context. Therefore, the goal is to get an insight in the individuals’ own interpretations of their reality [...] how the specific culture has influence on the specific communicative processes” (ibid., p. 15; translated). In other words, the relation between culture, communication and the context has an impact on how intercultural communication is understood. The interpretive, critical tradition consists of different research directions in intercultural communication and several theorists have pointed at each their own research direction in this tradition (ibid., p. 28-37), where the constructivist theory is one of them (ibid., 1995, p. 29).

3.1.3.1 Constructivist theory

In the interpretive, critical tradition the constructivist theory of communication was integrated by James L. Applegate and Howard E. Sypher, which in the 1980s created a communication theory based

on interpretive assumptions about the relationship between culture, communication and the everyday of individuals (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 6; Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 29). Regarding Applegate and Sypher's research on cultural communication, expectations cannot be used to state how culture influences communication and the other way around (Jensen & Løngreen, 1995, p. 29). The relation between these two concepts can be investigated, though, the understanding of communication in constructivist theory consists of individuals being actors in their own existence and interpretation of their experience (ibid., p. 30). It is the individual's choice which communication strategy to use, since every situation comes from a different experience (ibid.). In regards to use the constructivist theory to interpret data's outcomes, Applegate and Sypher recommend to conduct the research techniques as detailed as possible, because the theory focuses on the actors' own interpretations of their life (ibid.). The preferable method with which to use this theory is in qualitative techniques such as interviews and observations in this research, because the researcher obtains insight into the selected participants' lives.

Intercultural communication has in this research the role to support investigations about the participants' intercultural communicative competences in a bilingual environment, which leads us to the next theory – intercultural competence in foreign language and culture learning. In the deeper understanding this means that globalization has an influence on intercultural communication, because the society adjusts to local and global changes (Jensen, 1998, p. 41). While according to Jonathan Friedman, globalization is not “about changes in the movement of people” (Friedman, 1994, p. 239), but it must be seen as a phenomenon which has always got attention in different periods of time (ibid.). Globalization gives a freedom to individuals who can move around (Jensen, 1998, p. 15), because they have got mobility which provokes intercultural communication when traveling between countries. In other words this means that intercultural communication is a need for people who act among other cultures and nationalities, while intercultural competence is important to develop when interacting interculturally (Byram, 1997, p. 1).

3.2 Intercultural competence

“The concept ‘communicative competence’ was developed in the anglophone world by Hymes’ critique of Chomsky and the germanophone literature by Habermas” (Byram, 1997, p. 7). To learn to communicate intercultural the individual has to practice and develop intercultural competences in order to avoid misunderstandings (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 5). Intercultural competence is in some

frameworks called socio-cultural competence while in others, they are known as intercultural competence (Byram, 2000, p. 9-10; Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 4). According to Michael Byram and Geneviève Zarate, these socio-cultural competences in learning language require principles to encourage the learner “to situations of contact and exchange with native speakers thereof” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 5). Though one of the most important perspectives is that “however, it does have the aim of conveying and exemplifying, through the learning of a given language, competences which are transferable into other cultural systems” (ibid., p. 9), this theory should not be connected too closely with the language learning, but include a focus on the cultural experiences given by the international environment. Byram and Zarate further describe intercultural communication to be a phenomenon that “must be included in the learning procedures” (ibid., p. 5). The process of this communication and the ability to manage the relation between cultures and languages appear as a result of foreign language learning (ibid., p. 8), where “language learning is a valuable but time-consuming approach to other cultures, as are modes of social skills learning which prepare people for contact with other cultures” (Byram, 1997, p. 13). In this study is English the first language and Danish a second language for some of the learners at REC, while fulfilling requirements for competences of different types such as non-verbal communication in terms of social skills in contact with other cultures. The competence, in this study, is to communicate intercultural through sharing experiences with people from other cultures.

Experience acquires learning and discovering foreign cultures and languages which open the possibility to obtain competence for the interpretation of culture (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 6). In other words, when an individual is able to interpret certain objectives of a culture it prevents misunderstandings and conflicts that may be caused by cultural diversity. The diversity in culture can cause harm through attitude or assumptions between actors (Keats, 2000, p. 130). Intercultural communication presumes a behaviour of respect and acceptance for otherness which is part of intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, educational institutions with international environments need to monitor the development of intercultural competences among their learners, since “[...] intercultural competence is a keyword in education policy in general and has an important place in preambles and in policy position papers on values education” (Hu & Byram, 2009, p. XI). Another view on monitoring the development of intercultural competence can be seen by Milton Bennett’s (1993) *Model of intercultural sensitivity*, since the competences can always be developed further when the learner reaches a new stage in his competences. Bennett describes: “The model is

developmental because it assumes that issues at each stage need to be resolved in some way before the learner can move on to deal with more complex issues at later stages” (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 246). In this study I will take into consideration that intercultural competence does not have one result for the learners to reach during their stay at REC, but the learners can have a diverse experience depending on the amount of contact with people from another culture. The evaluation for different stages of intercultural competence will have an influence in the later analysis.

Intercultural competence is not a competence by its own but is put together by five competences (Byram, 2000, p. 10). The following objectives will help to describe “the term ‘competence’, which has many different meanings and whose content is generally rather vague, is here understood to be generic term comprising [...]” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 8) attitude and values, behaviour, knowledge, skills and the ability to learn (Byram, 2000, p. 10; Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 8). The understanding for intercultural development will show meaning in the following and the later analysis in chapter 4.

3.2.1 Attitudes and values

The first competence is defined by curiosity and openness towards other people, societies and cultures while maintaining the relation between native and foreign cultures (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 8; Byram, 1997, p. 50; Byram, 2000, p. 10). The attitude, referred to in this competence, emphasizes the enthusiasm of showing interest in various cultural systems and distancing oneself from the familiar routine of the native culture. This change of values gives access to the ability to manage diversity of social acceptance (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 9; Byram, 1997, p. 34). Hereby, the social influence creates a readiness to exclude wrong assumptions of otherness which provides conflict-free contact with unfamiliar, unrecognized practices and products (Byram, 2000, p. 10). The identification of cultural taboos and national values is an ability necessary to prevent conflicts, because attitude and values in intercultural competence presume the ability to distance oneself from relations to cultural differences (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 9). As far as the competence of attitude and values reaches, the competence activates situations of social acceptance as opposed to social exclusion from lack of knowledge about the foreign (Byram 1997, p. 34-35). Therefore, the competences as the ability to learn, knowledge and knowing how skills within intercultural competences are important to learn to understand the context in the target language and culture.

3.2.2 Ability to learn

“An ability to produce and operate an interpretative system with which to gain insight into hitherto unknown cultural meanings, beliefs, and practices, either in an familiar or in a new language and culture” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 10), describes the ability to learn requiring skills to discover and interact in a familiar and an unfamiliar way with people in different kinds of culture (Byram, 2000, p.10). Hence, the ability to interpret will be expanded to understand the meaning of learning as a competence itself. The ability to learn includes other abilities to obtain multiple perspectives: an “ability to interpret a new aspect in a known language and culture; ability to interpret in a linguistically similar/dissimilar system; ability to interpret in a culturally similar/dissimilar system” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 10).

The individual will gain new knowledge about culture and cultural practices which is a product from engaging with the targeted cultures and environment (Byram, 2000, 10). The ability of discovery recognizes significant phenomena in foreign environments, which develops the relationship to other phenomena (Byram, 1997, p. 38). Individuals who are interacting in foreign languages and cultures will develop strategies to better understand global connections and be able to recognize similarities and dissimilarities with their skills in real time communication and interaction (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 11; Byram, 2000, p. 10). They will explore that they can contribute learning with the newly gained knowledge and this will impact the ability to learn further.

3.2.3 Knowledge

The competence of knowledge is acquired by a system that the individual has dedicated himself to through structures of implicit and explicit knowledge in the learning process (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 11). Social groups in the familiar and unfamiliar culture can obtain knowledge from each other by sharing knowledge through cultural products and practices (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 12).

To obtain the competence of knowledge within the intercultural field, the learner must learn an awareness of references associated with areas of items. Knowing the description of references dedicated to a culture supplements the learner navigation in foreign cultural environments: “The first category is knowledge which may be more or less refined, but always present in some degree, whereas the second, involving knowledge about concepts and processes of interaction, is fundamental to successful interaction but not acquired automatically” (Byram, 1997, p. 35).

The cultural identity is one of the items the learner should be aware of such as historical conditions that have developed the values in a country (ibid., p. 36). The values in a culture can change practices

of cultures and influence the perceptions of family values, gender roles or taboos (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 12). Those values are part of a culture's identity and with knowledge about these references the learner can avoid harmful situations of ignorance. Knowing the difference of private and public spaces in national and regional communities can therefore be helpful when learning about a language or culture in the target country (ibid., p. 9+12). The foreign influences can change a country's political, economic and emotional opinion on the contact to foreign individuals, i.e. migrants can influence a country differently than tourists. The groups have different interests in the country, which is a knowledge that can have consequences in different ways.

“Consequently, ‘knowledge/knowing that’ is not the subject of a summative type of assessment adding up items of knowledge, but, within the framework of a preliminary evaluation at the beginning each stage in the learning process, it enables us to ascertain whether or not knowledge has been constructed through the actual experience of the foreign culture [...]” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13), therefore, knowledge about general processes of interaction between individuals and the society level will have importance in the learning process (Byram, 2000, p. 10). In the overall picture, the combination of knowing about certain elements in each of the four competences by Byram and Zarate will give the learner the final intercultural competence.

3.2.4 Skills/Knowing how

The fourth competence about skills appears through the integration of the three competences of *attitudes and values, the ability to learn and knowledge* (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13). Knowing-how to use the dedicated abilities and skills relating to and interpreting other cultures is the final intercultural competence (Byram, 1997, p. 37). As the learner has dedicated skills of interpreting and relating cultural events and documents, it will contribute the learner in socio-cultural situations when showing understanding for certain practices (Byram, 2000, p. 10). Towards the language pedagogy there are four specific objectives in terms of skills in the knowing-how competence, while it exists by the relational, interpretative, behavioural and geopolitical skill (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13-14). In the current research, the skill competence will mainly focus on the interpretative, behavioural and relational skill, because the research question has to be answered based on the learners' social interactions. Therefore, the three skills were most relevant to the research in regards to the learners navigation between cultures:

3.2.4.1 Interpretative skill

The interpretative skill is connected with other competences in this theory, since the interpretative ability to learn is necessary for the interpretation of interactive situations (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p.11) and the interpretative skill requires the ability of contextualizing references and opinions to associate it to the right person (ibid., p. 14). The dissemination of media obtains the role of interpreting opinions to the context that documents can be dated and identified to statements. The interpretative skill puts the ability to identify body language in the position to obtain understanding between two communities (ibid.). The learner will be able to interpret the environment around to understand the actions and communication of interlocutors.

3.2.4.2 Behavioural skill

The skill of behaviour gives the learner aspects of adapting his own culture to a foreign culture and the other way around can create knowledge in the own culture (ibid.) to understand the differences. The behaviour of individuals in their community can give the learner a qualification to evaluate social distances within foreign communities (ibid.).

3.2.4.3 Relational skill

The relational skill gives the learner the “capacity to use different sources of information about foreign context available in the learner’s country” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13). The learner should sustain personal contact to at least one member of the foreign community in order to keep a relation to the culture. This can give an ability to identify conflicts between two cultural communities (ibid.).

The learner must obtain a certain amount of social experiences with the foreign language and culture in order to develop the knowing how competence (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 16). The four competences explained above create together the intercultural competence. The researches main theoretical framework works with the intercultural communicative competence, which in this study will be explained as a combination of the intercultural communication and intercultural competence. A deeper understanding of this combination will be clarified in the following part.

3.3 Intercultural communicative competence

The intercultural communication (IC) and intercultural competence (IC) have both been explained as independent theories. This part of the theory will describe the connection between them and how they are combined in some cases in the analysis working as one theory which will be decisive for

answering the research question. The mix of IC and IC is involved in the research question and is the main reason for exploring the learners' development. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) "maintains a link with recent traditions in foreign language teaching, but expands the concept of 'communicative competence' in significant ways" (Byram, 1997, p. 3). In other words, learning about another language or in this studies case culture the communicative competence is a relevant concept to obtain intercultural competences. In my understanding of the theories they can be combined working as a mathematical equation by saying intercultural communication plus intercultural competence equal intercultural communicative competence:

$$IC + IC = ICC$$

This use of ICC is created from my own understanding of ICC and the has appeared in the process of finding a theory that will be possible to connect to the research questions theoretical approach. After exploring the broad field of intercultural communication and several understandings of how to approach this specific form of communicating among cultures the decision fell on finding a way to get an own understanding for this research area. Therefore, the intercultural communication and competence theories used in this research might be inspired by Michael Byram and Iben Jensen, but are approached differently when putting the IC and IC together to ICC.

4 Analysis

This chapter will enlighten the understanding of the data and find answers to the problem formulation “To what extent do learners develop intercultural communicative competences in a bilingual environment and how do they navigate between multiple cultures?” by analysing the collected data within the structure of the three types: observations, focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews. The theory will be adjusted regarding the content of the conversation and the learners’ mentioned experiences that show examples on intercultural communication and intercultural competences. Hereby, the competences will be spoken about within the specific competence such as attitude and values, ability to learn, knowledge and knowing how skills. In general the intercultural competence will appear as intercultural communicative competence (ICC) when the conversation shows examples on all four competences.

The research content is represented in this analysis as an element with the approach of interpretivism to find a deeper understanding of the intercultural communicative competence development among learners at Ranum Efterskole College (REC). The analysis examines social settings that have been observed during the data collection as well as social actions appearing in interviews with the focus group. The individual interviews will supplement the focus group interviews outcomes, since it has already shown that the Danish learners took the conversation by themselves. Lastly, all data will be supported with secondary literature in some parts of the analysis. All analysis will be considered within the theory of ICC, since this is the main theoretical framework that this research focuses on.

4.1 Observations

The observations have collected material about the learners’ life at REC and how they manage their everyday. During my stay at REC the learners have showed interest in my work, which among others is how I found participants for interviews. As it is explained in the observation material, the learners have a scheduled day with free time and activities besides the educational classes, which allow them to connect and communicate with each other outside the classroom (Appendix B).

4.1.1 Meeting the learners

The observations gave especially overviews and insights into settings, where the learners gave the impression to open up to a person who has no impact on them, but who is interesting because the person is different. This shows the first competence, attitude, in Byram’s intercultural competences, which emphasizes the enthusiasm by showing interest in other people’s cultural appearance and

unfamiliar practices (Byram, 1997, p. 34). The way they were talking made me feel like being a new learner at the school and their new friend, which changed as soon they saw me with teachers or in the role of a teacher, which happened during the voluntary activities (Appendix B). The interest in the new and unexplored was fascinating, because these learners were open to a stranger. The openness is one of the elements that people develop when they engage themselves with diversity, accept the diversity and learn that they can obtain knowledge by being curious such as Byram & Zarate describe their attitudes and values within intercultural study (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 8).

4.1.2 Grouping of nationalities

The young individuals are divided into rooms of 2-6 people and in Seminariehus each room has at least one international learner (Appendix B). This mixes the national groups to create a better international environment, where the young individuals learn to include everyone, because then the Danish learners have to use intercultural communication to interact with an international roommate to not exclude them from the social part in the room (Appendix B). Out of the perspective during the observation time the rooms I talked to presented themselves as helpful and caring for each other, which indicates a we-centralized behaviour (Gjøsund & Huseby, 2009, p. 61). The we-centralized behaviour in a group tends to focus on helpfulness, support, encouragement and listening to other members of the group to fulfil their own potential (Gjøsund & Huseby, 2009, p. 61; Ranum Efterskole College (b), 2014). This supportive dynamic in the rooms has the effect to bond the learners closer to each other, so they have people around them to exchange experiences in the end of a day. The room seems to be the safe place for the learners which from conversations with some learners was described as important for them to have such a place (Appendix B).

Other experiences in the rooms are different skills within the knowing how competence within the intercultural competences, because they learn the relational skill when being in contact to at least one individual from another culture (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13). It takes one individual from another culture in the room to build a relation to that culture, which is one of the advantages the learners get from living in mixed cultural rooms. Two other skills in the competence are the behavioral skill and interpretive skills, which both work on learning specific habits from cultures. The learners learn to exchange behaviors between each other when living in the same room (ibid., 14). At the same time it is expected that they learn to interpret and identify body language or communicative reactions (Byram and Zarate, 1994, 14). The attitude and values to prevent conflicts (ibid., p. 9), because acceptance and respect cover for, that are working against excluding each other in the room, which protects the

intercultural learner in a room with Danish learners. Likewise a conversation with two male learners explained that the international rooms in their opinion are extra attentive about exclusion in the room (Appendix B). Here it is important to mention that this conversation was about the situation inside the room, because another conversation with two female learners pointed out that not every learner is including everyone (Appendix B). This shows that some learners are faster to improve themselves to be more openminded than others and that the competence of an openminded attitude towards foreign cultures is not as easy as to develop for every individual. Therefore, it is discussable to what extend learners are developing their competences during the school year.

As it has been investigated, the individuals find others from the same nationality and hang out in that group to feel comfortable (Appendix B). When being with individuals from the same culture, they do not need to use their relational, behavioural or interpretive skills in the same way, because they understand each other on the same cultural level. The language has here an influential role for the grouping, because the learners can speak their mother tongue when they are close to equals (Appendix B). In the school Danish and English are the prevailing languages, while English is the mainly used language at the school. According to the school's website, all staff members in the administration and all teachers know English and can help with questions regarding the learners' stay (Ranum Efterskole College (c), 2014). The comfort that learners find in speaking with other individuals from the same culture has been described as family alike by a Global Perspectives teacher, who, must be assumed, has broadly developed intercultural competences to interpret the situations among the learners (Appendix B). Another teacher for the same type of class did as well speak about the languages, where her statements were building on the importance of diversity at the school (Appendix B). Both teachers agree on the value of diversity, but one of them has expressed an opinion on the challenges of the learners to a larger extend has commented on the exciting experiences and the beneficial learning outcomes. This shows how the development of ICC does not only depend on the knowledge that someone obtains about culture, but the ICC is in the same amount significant to the communication between the learners and their language use. The Danish learners tend to speak Danish when they get the chance, while the rest speaks their mother tongue when they need to relax and feel comfortable for a conversation(Appendix B). Those behaviours were seen all around the day in situations where they needed to be comfortable, i.e. at meals, in the classroom sitting in national groups, on the corridor when they felt private. The difference that has been noticed between the Danish and the international learners is the behaviour of either the international learners trying to hide

or Danish learners being more confident to speak in class or at meals (Appendix B). Some situations though were showing cases of Danish learners forgetting to speak English to include the rest of the table at the meals (Appendix B). However they use English language to communicate together and even learn other languages if they want, which gives them a growing competence in the ability to learn with and from each other, because the ability to learn arrives them from different faces: “ability to interpret a new aspect in a known language and culture; ability to interpret in a linguistically similar/dissimilar system; ability to interpret in a culturally similar/dissimilar system” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 10).

4.1.3 Comfort

The comfortability is not only from a suggestion about the language, but it is connected to the practices and behaviours that are determined by culture. Meaning, the observation has shown, that international learners keep a bigger distance between themselves and others, which is relatable to social communicative distance: “When we choose a certain distance, we signalize at the same time something about how close we are attached to others (Hall, 1973). But the borders vary from culture to culture” (Gjøsund & Huseby, 2009, p. 79). The Danish learners seem more confident, because their surrounding in the Danish culture has shown them that it has advantages in life to be more free in speaking and the majority of Danish learners make it easier for them to speak to someone, because they have more individuals to choose between. Danish learners can choose to talk English and Danish, which gives them one more language they can use (Appendix B). A similar situation is experienced by the Thai learners in the Thai food cooking activity which is arranged once in a while, because the teacher who is in charge of it sees the importance to give these learners the opportunity to get a little bit of feeling home when they are surrounded by equal culture (Appendix B). This activity does not exclude other learners from participating; on the contrary it gives the opportunity to learners from other national cultures than the Thai culture to get a piece of Thai culture. To both explain it from the intercultural communication theory and the intercultural competence theory, then the Thai food cooking activity is an example on ICC development. The learners develop a piece of all four intercultural competences while they get a trustworthy real experience from meeting the Thai learners as a majority which shows them from a different face than in the everyday where they are the minority. The first competence they learners develop is attitude and value, because they are curious about what this Thai food cooking is and what they are accomplishing together. The second competence is developed by the ability to learn about another culture, because both Thai learners and others are learning from each other such as I learned a Thai girl about “Danish” coconut milk

(Appendix B). The third competence goes hand in hand with the second, because it is about gaining knowledge about the known and the unknown while individuals are interacting with each other. As it has been explained in the theory chapter, the last competence knowing how does not function without the first three. The fourth competence uses the obtained knowledge and ability to learn together with the openness and curiosity from the competence of developing attitude and values. Knowing how to use the obtained knowledge is among these young individuals to be able to interpret and relate culture to the behaviour that they meet. Explained in a short version, for the Thai learners the cooking activity is about to experience and show other learners about their home and family practices.

4.1.4 Activities

Activities are part of the REC's everyday. Each day learners can choose a morning activity, a profile activity and an evening activity between dinner time and bedtime (Appendix B). Besides activities in the weekends, some days are planned dissimilar from the scheduled days such as a Zombie-run during exam period or the Fastelavn party one evening in February. Among the stay at REC, but especially during these activities with many participants, the learners' responsibility for their own actions, which means many activities that replace a scheduled school day, have obligatory participation and if a learner does not show up he must be aware of following consequences (Appendix B).

The learners have own responsibility to participate in obligatory activities that are on the school's schedule such as the Zombie-run is an outdoor day during the exam period to separate the noise from silence (Appendix B). Half of the learners are writing an exam while the other half is outside in the woods playing the Zombie-run Game. This is an example on the school's activities that consider all learners' best demands. The consideration does show the school's knowing how of cultural demands in different situations. Some of the cultures have a stronger study engagement than others. Not every learner studies hard for a test, because they have different opinions on how serious they would like to participate in the school (Appendix B). The school gives space for the diversity of culture and has the focus on all learners' needs. Furthermore, the Zombie-run game was made to have fun and create a teambuilding. The implementation of the game showed two sides of learners. The first group was not as excited as the second group, which in the focus of this study is relatable to the participation of international and Danish learners. The second group had a larger amount of international learners, which might have affected the game; the participation was more active and it seemed like everyone had fun. This discovery has to do with everyone playing the game. The intercultural competences

were showing how they are determined to the openness and curiosity of the attitude and value to a situation. Without the openness and curiosity to the new and undiscovered the learner cannot develop in an international environment. The teambuilding game reflected the individual learner's ability to learn and "operate an interpretative system with which to gain insight into [...] practices, either in a familiar or in a new language and culture" (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 10). Hereby, the activity required the learners first two intercultural competences before starting the game as well as social skills to work together in their teams. Afterwards their skills of interpreting and relating cultural events were tested.

4.1.5 Social skills

The learners' social skills were mostly investigated in the free time and non-educational situations, because they were interacting outside of the academic context. It was observed that they could relax better, because they could find the groups of people that they had similar interests or share a language with (Appendix B). The interesting social skills appeared when they were not expected. Likewise, the situation in the gym during a workout session with seven learners. A girl was almost giving up, but one of the boys motivated her by continuing the workout together with her (Appendix B). He helped her by doing partner sit-ups instead of individuals and stayed together with her the rest of the workout. The surprising point was that he gave up his fast time and slowed down to end the workout together with her. That was an example of the "togetherness" that many learners mention in conversations about the social life and in the interview conducted for this research. The social life at the school is about living together and not beside each other, which partly answers the question about how learners navigate between multiple cultures. The social life develops the learner's independence because these young individuals learn to live without their family and have to settle in with new people.

4.1.6 Independence

The learners' independence emerged through conversations with the individual learner as part of the observations. The conversations started about where they were from and what they liked about the stay at REC which led to the topic of independence (Appendix B). The conversation with the Italian girl was surprisingly mature for her age of 16. She knew exactly what she wanted to use her education for and how her future education should look like. The school equips the learners with independence by giving them opportunities that they have to catch themselves. A learner gets the chance to see the world and put together his travel list by choosing the culture and profile class related subjects, so each

learner gets an individual profile of education (Appendix B; Ranum Efterskole College (d), 2014). The learners I spoke to in the free time hour were all sure that they choose Ranum for the academic part, which was a bit different in the interviews, where the learners had different reasons why they choose the school (Appendix C). The independence of the learners reaches to the responsibility for their own actions, which should mean that they become aware that they are on their own, when they make decisions that might turn out to be trouble (Appendix B). They learn to manage their time regarding homework and they learn the consequences of not studying, because they do not have parents to remind them to make their homework. The school gives them a free time hour and a quiet hour/study time where they can accomplish their homework. In cases they do not use the time they have to learn to say no to evening activities, where they can usually hang out with their friends (Appendix B). As it has been explained in the constructivist theory of intercultural communication the individuals are actors in their own existence and interpretation of their experience when they choose to communicate a certain experience, which for the conversations I had with the learners showed no difference between the nationalities. This discovery shows that the participants are involved in a culture on its own at REC. The school mixes the individuals so that they can learn from each other as well as they can learn to be independent from everybody (Appendix B). The intercultural competences are developing simultaneously with the development of their own culture at the school. In other words this means that the learner is an individual with a culture that can be put similar to a personality, but the learners together have another culture together which is not comparable to other cultures since it is a culture without limitations apart from ethics. They accept the diversity and they call their culture “togetherness” (Appendix B). The culture of togetherness is inspired by the school’s spirit, but is created through every individual at the school, because everyone respects each other’s cultures and values them by learning from each other (Appendix B). This can be put equal with the combination of all the four intercultural competences, which together with the intercultural communication of sharing cultural experiences creates the ICC of REC.

To explain further to what extend the learners develop ICC, the following parts of analysing the focus group and the individual interviews will give understanding through conversations with selected learners. These will give insight into conversations focused on topics such as the learners’ sense of belonging, perspective on education and school life and their feelings about being distanced from their families.

4.2 Focus group interviews

This analysis part does approaches the ICC of the learners and their navigation between the different cultures, as it is questioned in the problem formulation, through a focus group which has been conducted in terms of an interview with a group of eight learners.

4.2.1 Meeting the participants

When meeting the participants it was as well getting closer to the IGCSE program. Three male participants at the ages of 16 and 17, who all have their roots somehow connected to Denmark and five female participants at the ages of 15 and 16, who have their roots in Denmark, Mexico and Thailand. All eight participants follow the IGCSE program at the school, while one takes the AS level (Appendix C). “Cambridge IGCSE is the world’s most popular international qualification for students aged 14 to 16. It is recognised by leading universities and employers worldwide, and is an international ‘green-card’ to progression and success. Developed more than 25 years ago, it is tried, tested and trusted by schools worldwide” (Ranum Efterskole College (e) 2014).

The participants background information can have an impact on their experience of the cultures in the school, since they have different approaches based on their childhood. Tobias is 16 and from the island Funen in Denmark, Zander is 16 and from Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark and shares a room with Tobias and Asker, who is 17 and has roots in Denmark, but has lived in the UK ever since he can remember. The other five participants share a room as well. Valentina is 16 and has lived in Mexico until she moved to REC, Prim is 16 and is born in Thailand, Maja is 16 as well and from Denmark, Emma is 15 and has lived most of her life in Denmark, but tried to live in Spain for one year, while Ricarda is 16 and is from the big cities Aarhus and Copenhagen in Denmark (Appendix C).

4.2.2 Motivation

On the question “What was your motivation to study at Ranum Efterskole College and why did you choose it?” (Appendix A) the answers from the participants appeared with a positive attitude to the international and activity inspired environment (Appendix C, min. 02:30 – 02:35; min. 02:41 – 02:46; min. 02:48 – 02:58). Their openness to new friendships and the curiosity in other cultures such as “[...] you get to meet new cultures and the concept of the school with all the internationals [...]” (Appendix C, min. 02:59 – 03:30), alludes to the attitude that is expected to be able to develop the first intercultural competence which is required to obtain ability and skills in the rest of competences. The learners begin their intercultural journey by choosing the school for the cultural exchange and

the social experience in the diverse environment of “catapulted people, practices and beliefs from different cultures into shared and contested physical and virtual spaces... in unprecedented ways” (Sorrells, 2012, p. 372). By means of this, the learners are reaching out for knowledge by using their ability to learn in which they develop three intercultural competences while they actively participate in the environment of REC.

The participants do not describe the grouping of nationalities as it has been observed and explained in non-formal conversations with teachers and learners. However, the participants choose to describe the school’s environment as one international unity, where they want to experience new people (Appendix C, min. 07:42 – 08:29; min. 08:43 – 9:10). The interview was conducted in February, which is around the middle of the school year, when they know each other and has got used to staying at the school, but this might affect the view on social settings. Apart from that, the participants mention the selection of subjects as a broad setpoint of choosing REC besides the international environment (Appendix C, min. 02:59 – 03:30; min. 03:34 – 03:49). They see new opportunities to choose subjects that are usually possible at schools in other countries such as Cheerleading which is described by the girls to be popular in the United States (Appendix C). Maja explains: “In this period I have Cheerleading which also was one of the things, that I was looking very much forward to [...]” (Appendix C, min. 04:21 – 04:49). One experience that Cheerleading includes is a travel to Los Angeles: “[...] So you can choose a profile subject with culture. As well as me and Maja are Cheerleading in LA there is culture as well” (Appendix C, min. 06:50 – 07:14). Ricarda alludes to this regard an answer from Tobias, who claims that there are not enough culture travels. While Ricarda tries to explain that there is culture even in the active profile subjects and that it is about choosing a profile that has culture included in the travel. Tobias did not see this point of view when he first claimed: “The culture subjects are kind of the best thing though. In my opinion where I have been so far, it is almost a bit sad that you cannot pick three culture subjects in one year and go on three longer and exciting travels” (Appendix C, min. 06:22 – 06:36). This is an example of how Ricarda has developed her skills of intercultural competences, showing that “capacity to use different sources of information about foreign context available in the learner’s country” (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13) and monitor over a place to see the cultural elements. She manages to sustain a personal contact to the foreign culture through the experience she made in earlier meetings with cultures. Meaning that she communicates her perspective to underline a positive relation, where she as “[...] the individual selects certain communication behaviors out of a wide range of possibilities, thereby

succeeding or failing to achieve agreement with the interaction partner as to what is and what is not to take place subsequently” (Kim, 2015, p. 27).

Subsequently, there were not very many answers to the question “What do you expect from the education here at Ranum Efterskole College?” (Appendix A) since they all agreed with Tobias’ answer on using the year at REC to have a life changing time, except from Asker and Prim. Asker needs the year to finish his scholar education (Appendix C, min. 07:33 – 08:29). Prim did not actively participate in the group interview, which can be interpreted to cultural reasons. In the observation, the Thai culture has been interpreted as a reserved and modest culture which needs comfort and equality to open up (Appendix B). The participants seemed more interested in answering the question about the social life at REC which includes their perception of being roommates.

4.2.3 Comfort

When asking “How do you feel about the social life?” (Appendix A), the first answer is: “It is really amazing!” (Appendix C, min. 08:41 – 08:43), while other participants relate their answers to the rooms’ social life, where after they explain that there are different types of social life among the groups they hang out with (Appendix C, min. 09:11 – 09:17). The room is described as home by one of the participants, who expresses that they experience a certain comfort in company with each other. The young individuals have to live without their parents, which is why they find other ways to find family alike routines: “We don’t have that many common friends but we have some, we have some, but we don’t hang with the same people outside the room. Inside the room it is more like sisters we tell each other everything, when you get “home” if you can say so at night we can talk to each other and share our problems and stuff like that. We really do that a lot” (Appendix C, min. 09:17 – 09:40). The recognition of the school being a home for the learners makes their engagement to school activities easier because they recognize the school as a place of fun and comfort where they do not have to hide. Instead, staying at the school and having roommates give the learners the opportunity to acknowledge their experience and share those with others, which opens up for new insights to the environment with all the cultures they meet. The school contributes to the learners’ expansion of meeting people and being comfortable with that, because they know, each night when they come back to their roommates, they can find a comfort zone to share thoughts. The opportunity to find a comfort zone in a new and international environment contributes to the development of intercultural competences through acceptance and recognition of intercultural communication. Hence, the intercultural communication becomes the learners’ general communication type, when sharing

thoughts about experiences of the day with his roommates who are probably from another country than himself. Meaning, the intercultural communication is the communication in the comfort zone of the learners of this focus group.

Both the male and the female room have experienced that roommates are leaving. The boys' room had one roommate more who was suspended, which they did not explain any further than their own feelings of the room feeling more empty. Tobias describes: "Now we have two empty beds, because one of the exchange student who was going to be here for the entire year just went home. So the room feels empty" (Appendix C, min. 11:42 – 11:50) and "Went home, yes, more send home. So the room is a little bit empty at the moment. It is a little sad, it just changes it up. It becomes less active, because people who were friends with the guy who used to live in the room" (Appendix C, min. 11:51 – 12:12). The rooms have a certain dynamic when the roommates find comfort in each other's company, which can change the atmosphere when a person leaves the room. In other words, the rooms give the learners a group to feel good around, which is important when within one year experience they more than they can tell their friends and families back home. The comfort zone is important for young individuals. The girls' room experienced that a former roommate could not find this comfort zone, which ended up in her changing rooms (Appendix C, min. 26:04 – 26:35). Emma tells that the girl had trouble understanding English which was the reason to not find a comfort zone in the room, because she had to spend a lot of energy each day to try to follow the rooms' dynamic (Appendix C, min. 27:02 – 27:09). The language is an important part at the school. The learners have to speak English, because the diversity from languages and cultures of the learners makes it otherwise hard to communicate. They need one language in which everyone can communicate together, which supports the Welsch's idea of cultures being interconnected and entangled with each other (Welsch, 1999). In ICC this means that sharing practices in terms of a language, it supports to develop intercultural competences and to avoid misunderstandings (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 5). Understanding each other on a cultural and a lingual level is, therefore, the turning point of reaching comfort between the learners. Compared to the activities where they can experience who and what they would like to be.

4.2.4 Activities

The question "Have you participated in any projects related to the school?" (Appendix A) brings up confusions because the school uses the term activity for any type of active participation outside of the academic classes. This is an example of how fast individuals can misunderstand each other by using different terms about the same practice. The background of each individual influences the

understanding of elements within the same language, therefore, it is important that the learners at the school find a way to develop in similar intercultural directions to be able to communicate together. The intercultural differences are to develop intercultural competences among the learners, which should make it easier to communicate together. The activities give the learners common experiences and still each individual will experience situations different, because they have their own understandings and perceptions of their surroundings. In the beginning of the school year, the school had tried to motivate the learners with competitions between the houses, which went the wrong way according to the teachers as Ricarda describes: “I think the teachers are a bit [...] overbeskyttende [overprotective]” (Appendix C, min. 16:22 – 16:32) and she continues: “Yes, they cannot take a bit fun and we of course bully the other houses but it is all the houses” (Appendix C, min. 16:34 – 16:43). The three houses, Seminariehus, Ranumhus and Kærhus, had started to compete not only during the activities, but as well during the every day. This might have bothered individuals who did not feel the same fun. The dissimilar opinions on when something is fun or not fun depends on the cultures and “the practical aspects of culture; that is, everything that the people at a cross-cultural meeting do in different ways” (Plum, 2008, p. 29). Ricarda who claimed, that the teachers do not see the fun part in houses teasing each other, does probably not see the situation from the eyes of a non-Danish learner. She is Danish which could point to the fun emanating from Danish humour: “Danes often use irony, and self-directed irony, when communicating with colleagues, whatever their nationality” (Lundquist, 2014, p. 143). This shows that Ricarda has not fully out developed her intercultural competences because her sensitivity for other cultures practices is not executive enough. However, she was able to see the cultural part in the profile travels, which were analysed above. Therefore, ICC are important for conversations with other cultures or at least in the target language and culture to understand the right context. By means of which the ability to learn includes to obtain multiple perspectives of the cultural system. Then the learner improves strategies to better understand global connections and he will be able to recognize similarities or dissimilarities.

The interview with the focus group does reveals the school’s engagement to friendship schools in Nepal and Oman and how this is an opportunity to build relations to these countries as Maja explains: “[...] Now we have friends in Oman. We have a friendship school in Nepal. You can say we have some projects, if you want to say so, we have different relations across the world” (Appendix C, min. 13:39 – 14:20). The awareness about the advantage of being connected with people across the world renders visible that the learners understand what the school tries to teach them about getting an

international profile. Likewise, the school's aim is that learners participate actively in the provided activities: "We have chosen this approach to inclusiveness, participation and democracy, because we ultimately believe the best way to *learn* is to *experience*!" (Ranum Efterskole College (a), 2014). With the vision that the learners will get most out of their stay at REC by learning about "Inclusive Community and Learning" and "Participatory Democracy" (Ranum Efterskole College (a), 2014), hereby, the learner takes part in creating his own community of approval. Being interculturally competent means as well accepting and recognizing each other for diversity, because individuals do not get better chances of learning about other cultures than directly acknowledging the relational skill as important. Consequently, this knowledge is constructed through the experience of the foreign culture which the school provides the learner with (Byram & Zarate, 1994, p. 13). The learners' task is to receive the options and put the finishing touches to them through personal features. At the same time this independent development gives the learner certain social skills helped by reminders of the importance of "togetherness" (Appendix B; Appendix C, min. 18:01 – 18:17). It is part of the school's DNA as it is described as a relevant element of the school's social life.

4.2.5 Social skills

"It is just togetherness or #togetherness" (Appendix C, min. 17:53 – 17:56) Emma explains with a laugh and a sense of irony. That answer was a bit unexpected when the question "What can you contribute with during your stay?" (Appendix A) was asked. The school uses the term in a way that makes it sound like an activity as Emma explains: "The principle says it all the time, 'Now we need to do some togetherness' 'Don't do this, do togetherness'" (Appendix C, min. 18:18 – 18:26). The learners seem to make fun of it, but also saying all the time it makes the learners aware of the importance and the meaning of the word. They hear it maybe more than they would assume it is necessary, but the effect is visible at least in the focus group. The group puts their own values to words, which shows the awareness of the word's meaning. The learners are taught about togetherness and being aware of utilizing social skills. Togetherness has been described as one of the most important elements of the school's social environment and can be interpreted to be the name of the school's culture. The togetherness should in the best case give them interpretative skills to be able to identify certain body languages or expressions of other learners that might be culture related. Hereby they can better be together and support each other by making use of their skills.

In comparison to the togetherness, the group has learned that every social gathering is best when people bring a positive mood and perspective, because negativity can develop likewise an epidemic

(Appendix C, min. 20:17 – 20:45). Zander calls it the “Hippie concept” (Appendix C, min. 20:15) because there is a need for a positive atmosphere for everyone to feel good. As it appears from the interview, the group wishes more social skills when the learners are together at bigger places such as in the assemble hall: “There is one thing and that is the worst thing at the school, that people cannot shut up in the ensemble hall, when somebody is on stage and talking. So I think to respect each other” (Appendix C, min. 19:00 – 19:15). The learners learn a lot about respecting other cultures, but as a gathered community they forget about the respect to each other as human beings, which has nothing to do with culture but it has with manners. The perception of the learners as individuals gives the idea that they grow and improve their own personalities, but sometimes the egocentric teenager comes through the mature individual, which might affect difficulties in the social skills. Therefore, it is important that they develop their competence on a social level knowing how to keep their relational skills active. “Development happens through children’s participation in activity settings. Socially distributed cognition appears in children’s group activities; each child plays a part in furthering the goal of the activity, according to her developmental competence level and social status” (Maynard, 2005, p. 3). Without other learners the individual learner cannot develop social skills since this needs interaction with other individuals.

4.2.6 Independence

The last question to the focus group explores how the learners develop their competencies during the stay in an intercultural environment by asking, “What benefits do you get from staying at the school?” (Appendix A). With the question I use the question as a tool to find out about the learners’ ability to become more independent in the community of foreign cultures, to obtain an openness to unknown environments based on the observations’ explored topic. The learners improve their attitude to what is foreign which makes them to turn them into more independent individuals. Such as one of the answers Tobias gives which derives from everyone being responsible for himself which makes them independent of others (Appendix C, min. 23:30 – 23:34). Seeking out for other people is everyone’s own responsibility, because if every learner would expect other people to come and talk, nobody would speak with each other, which would result in no (intercultural) communication. The learners improve their personalities by taking initiative to contact other learners. This environment expects the learners to be independent and to learn from each other, which sometimes means stepping out of your comfort zone. The learner might not always see the long term perspectives advantages, but he learns that he needs to take a risk when it comes to meeting new people. In other words, the learner gives parts of his personality, whereby he becomes emotional woundable. However, this is where the

learner is independent - responsible for his own actions - and improves his personality. Ricarda thus explains that the learners need to accept more, because everyone is in the same situation: “I think you learn to accept more, you learn to, you don’t get so judgy when you meet new people. Not like, wow they are not my type, because you get to meet a lot of people and a lot of different people” (Appendix C, min. 23:35 – 24:02). Learning how to meet new people is part of improving your own personality such as speaking another language in the everyday, which they are not used to.

The school’s environment builds on a bilingual environment with English being the language to communicate in. Some learners might not have tried to speak English in their everyday which can make it a challenge. The focus group’s girls had a roommate who could not speak English which was not only a challenge for the girl, but also for the whole room (Appendix C). The learners develop their social skills within a short time because they need people to relate to. For the girl it was not easy to connect with roommates from other cultures, because they did not have a language to share. Therefore, the school’s bilingual environment is an important element for making the international environment work. Intercultural communication does not exclusively involve verbal communication, since “It involves verbal and non-verbal communication as well as written and possibly other means of expression” (Plum, 2008, p. 29), but only communicating non-verbal might cause lacks in the communication and impact misunderstandings. The learners’ time at REC impacts the learners’ ability to communicate with as many cultures as possible, but without a common language they might not get as close as i.e. the roommates in this focus group, which earlier seemed to be an essential element for a place with a comfort zone.

4.3 Semi-structured individual interviews

The observations had the aim to give an overall view on the learners’ lives from an outsider’s perspective, whereas the focus group had the aim to get closer to the learners in a small group. The focus group gave ideas of the group dynamics and the rooms. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to give insights into the individual’s perspective of the life at REC. Individual interviews have the benefit of getting a private conversation with the learner, because he does not have to approach other than himself. Each learner seemed satisfied to participate in the interview, but some were more free to speak than others. The questions are the same as with the focus group, however it was expected that the answers will differ from the group interview which gave a deeper insight into the single individual’s thoughts and feelings.

The learners that were interviewed are from Mexico, Thailand and Denmark. They share the international program, but each have different views on the academic effort relatable to their goals at REC. They have different goals to achieve during their stay which makes the interview and this research interesting when comparing their answers.

4.3.1 Motivation

Since the questions are the same as the focus group interview questions, the first question to investigate the learner's stay at REC and the meaning of cultural diversity is "What was your motivation to study at Ranum Efterskole College and why did you choose it?" (Appendix A). The question does not directly ask about cultural diversity, but the learners used cultural diversity and the international environment in their answers (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F, Appendix G).

The Mexican learner Victor gave clear answers in the interview which gave the impression that he knows what he wants for his future. His answer on the first question was: "I came here to Ranum to get a new perspective on different cultures, besides it's a good experience to meet different people" (Appendix D, min. 00:43 – 00:54). Faria from Thailand explains that her reason to choose Ranum is the three travels, because her stay is comparable with a gap year before studying at university. From her expressions, it appears that she wants to get a tolerant perspective on cultures from other continents, because gaining knowledge about cultures is important for her (Appendix E). The gap year means for her to take the opportunity to learn about the world's cultures: "[...] this world is so big, there are thousands of things you haven't learned. I have to challenge myself just to live with the people who are totally different from where I am from [...]" (Appendix E, min. 02:36 – 03:53). Valentina wanted an exchange year combined with a boarding school, which REC could make possible (Appendix F, min. 00:24 – 00:45). The fourth learner, Hanna, describes her motivation to be at REC as a cultural decision. Meaning, that she wanted to return to Denmark after living in Mexico, Slovakia and Greenland, but she did not want it to be "110 % completely Danish" (Appendix G, min. 00:37 – 01:06) because she was not ready for that (Appendix G, min. 00:37 – 01:06). Besides the cultural reason, Hanna did make the mature decision to think about her future after the stay at REC. Her interest in the educational part was partly why she choose REC, because the international program of IGCSE gives her the opportunity to go back to study everywhere in the world. At the same time she takes the Danish Folkeskole exams to get the Danish 9th grade certificate. Hanna explains her expectation to the academics: "Well, I expect a high level, that's what I am used to and

high level is always nice [...]” (Appendix G, min. 01:39 – 01:55). From all four participants, Hanna is the only participant mentioning the high level expectations, while Victor describes the academics should become better comparable throughout the school year. He says: “Yes I would prefer to get grades for each homework individually, because you can see the development throughout the year and what you need to focus on. Let’s say you are given a piece of paper he says it looks nice, in the end of the year it will not help you, because you would not be sure if you did the correct task or not” (Appendix D, min. 05:11 – 05:30). Valentina and Faria do not need their grades for any recommendations, which makes their motivation and actions at REC to be about the social and intercultural part. They wish to learn about other cultures at the school, which is more possible outside the classes (Appendix E, Appendix F). Faria gives the impression that she expects to meet individuals from many different cultures to improve her knowledge. The knowledge about culture is the turning point for intercultural competences, because after obtaining knowledge about foreign cultures she will be able to know how to interact in socio-cultural settings.

4.3.2 Comfort

Asking the participants “How do you think and feel about the social life?” (Appendix A) was similar to the focus group interview. The question was answered with mixed feelings from the four participants since all of them had expectations to get a social experience at the school. This is understandable when applying at the school after checking out the school’s website and social media. The school advertises social relations such as “Join us now and you are guaranteed to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience!” (Ranum Efterskole College (f) 2014) on their website or on Facebook with a cover video using the Danish words: “Individualitet, selvstændighed, udvikling, fællesskab, mangfoldighed, udforskning, både social og fagligt. Rejser, kulturmøder, livsøjeblikke, indsigt og udsigt, på Ranum sætter vi rammerne for din dannelse. Her kan du blive alt det, som du er” (Ranum Efterskole College (2018) – “Individuality, independence, development, community, diversity, exploration, both social and academical. Travels, cultural meetings, life moments, insights and outsghts at Ranum we create your education. Here you can become all, that you are” (Ranum Efterskole College (2018), translated). The interviews were focused about similar topics as the website, while the answers of the interviews show that not all the learners experience the same easy approach to social life as the advertisement is telling them. Therefore, the following answers seem not all to be satisfied with the social life which the school had promised them.

Faria expresses: “I really like how we share the social life here, because here we finish an academy class around 2.30 pm and after that we have activities where we can meet different people and we can do different things each day. Evening activities are different every day, so that is the opportunity for students to choose what they want to do and to choose what they like for example you can go to design room or you can go to Badminton. Whenever you do the activities it is an opportunity to get to know new people and to have a conversation with friends [...]” (Appendix E, min. 06:00 – 07:12). She has the positive picture alike experience that was promised through the advertisement, compared to Victor, who shortly explains that he likes the environment and the friendly atmosphere, but he does not express further information about his experience with the social life (Appendix D). Valentina explains sceptically that the social life is complicated for introverted people because the learners have to make contact on their own (Appendix F, min. 01:56 – 02:26). The same topic was mentioned in the focus group interview, where the participants discussed to what extent learners have to act confidently even though they are not (Appendix C). The social life is an important element in the development of intercultural competences since the competences can only be developed when individuals interact with each other in one or the other way. Therefore, the comfort in the social life is decisive for the intercultural development and navigation among the learners. Without the comfort they are not able to experience the social life in the same way as confident learners, because social interaction does need at least two individuals in contact with each other. Even better, when the learners are from different countries or cultures, because then they can share practices such as cooking, dancing or playing. The non-verbal interaction in practice gives the learners certain knowledge and skills which verbal communication cannot give them. Therefore, the learners need to be comfortable by being around each other and experiencing activities together, because they might learn more in practice than when just talking about an activity. The communication about each other’s cultural practices expects the learner to have a certain pre-knowledge to understand what the foreign individual is talking about, since the imagination has to support the activity in the learner’s mind.

Hanna’s answer to the question about her feelings about the social life gave the impression that she expects the school to take responsibility for the learner’s social life, when she said: “[...] It is very good and they are doing a great job in mixing us together [...]” (Appendix G, min. 02:28 – 02:49). As it has been interpreted before, Hanna does respond differently to the questions than the other participants. Her mature perspective on school life makes her seem comfortable in a learning environment. This gives the impression that she uses challenges to develop her personality. She has

already lived different places of the world, therefore a new experience needs to have a higher level of challenge to make her uncomfortable with a situation. She knows her limitations and what is important for her development (Appendix F). The development of intercultural competences does not only happen by a travel with the school, because it must be assumed that she has a pre-understanding about cultural differences and an acceptance for individuals to be different from herself. For Hanna the development happens by seeking the cultures that she has not met on her journey with her parents. There are always more cultures to obtain knowledge about, but Hanna has already reached higher stages of intercultural competence from her life in four different countries, compared to Valentina who has lived in Mexico her whole life (Appendix F; Appendix G). Therefore, the comfortability of Hanna and Valentina differs, when it comes to the social life. They have both different experiences of talking to people from other cultures with other languages.

4.3.3 Activities

“Have you participated in any projects related to the school?” (Appendix A) seemed as one of the hardest questions for all participants, since both among the individual interviews and the focus group it created confusion. The only participant who was able to understand the question was Hanna, who let’s assume, that other participants had not as many experiences with school projects as Hanna with her background. The question was asked to investigate “How do the learners experience the intercultural environment? How do the learners develop their competencies during the stay in an intercultural environment?” (Appendix A). The interview question, “Have you participated in any projects related to the school?” (Appendix A), might have confused them at first, but after shortly explaining what was meant with projects, they all found answers.

Valentina tells that she has been on the school’s football team, which is a free time activity that the learners can choose. The life at REC involves many different types of profile subjects and free time activities that are related to sports (Ranum Efterskole College (g), 2014). Victor shows his strong side on the activities beyond the obligatory program because he has participated in the preparation of a harvest party that the school planned in the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, he explains how the responsibilities were distributed which brought the learners closer (Appendix D, min. 01:57 – 02:21). Victor must have been satisfied about the project, because when asking him about a project, he started talking in a larger amount. The project gave him a certain comfort to get closer with the other learners. At the same time, the project was his chance to show his effort and observe the outcome. This success moment developed the intercultural competence of Victor’s ability to learn

from other activities than homework namely the interaction with learners from the other cultures. Similarly, Hanna describes her participation at a Red Cross Youth project that some learners of the school participated in: “[...] I participated in a Red Cross Youth thing, it was nice. There was this guy helping us in contact with the asylum center. Doing an event with those, the teamwork was really great [...] I made a new subject, a new profile subject for the school, very nice. Everyone was really working with it, no one was really against it” (Appendix G, min. 02:59 – 03:44). For Hanna the regular school year seems not enough. She gives the impression that school is easy and the obligatory school is not interesting enough. This shows that individuals with a higher stage of intercultural competences are not as much impacted by the environment, while individuals without experiences in meeting new people are more distracted to learn to interact with people from other cultures. Besides creating a profile subject, participating in voluntary work and taking both the 9th grade IGCSE class and the 9th grade Danish exams, additionally, Hanna does also participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, where she has to fulfill different tasks within a certain amount of weeks (Appendix G). Faria did also participate in voluntarily work, which was contributing to the work of Danish Refugee Council (Appendix E, min. 07:46 – 08:30). This shows that all four learners have participated in activities outside their obligatory classes, some more than others, but most importantly is the development that the learners are going through when throwing themselves at new activities. Their experiences grow with active participation in voluntary work that is focused on the Danish society, which gives the international learners the opportunity to learn more about Danish society and how Danish society is solving problems. These insights give competences of knowledge and knowing how skills in the Danish society, which are valuable for the development of intercultural competences as well as ICC, because the learners have to communicate with Danish organisations.

4.3.4 Social skills

The question “What can you contribute with during your stay?” (Appendix A) indirectly asks about the development of the learners, since they describe how they have personally developed during the time at REC and gained new knowledge from cultures.

The language learning takes part in this development as well, such as Faria explains: “I think the most important thing that I can contribute with is the language, because here you speak Danish and English and I kind of know how to speak English. [...] Then when I communicate with my host family I try to use Danish as much as I can [...]” (Appendix E, min. 09:20 – 11:03). According to her answer, she sees language as the element that she can contribute with besides her culture. As it has already

been explained in the observation analysis, the learners from Thailand have a cooking class once in a while as an evening activity. Sharing from her culture is Faria's contribution to the other learners, which at the same time is the school's goal for the learners – to make an intercultural exchange between each other's cultures – and from Faria as well (Appendix E, min. 09:20 – 11:03). Language is part of the intercultural competences, since language learning is a part of knowledge which the learner have to be aware of. The target language has to be practiced to obtain more knowledge which is what Faria is trying with the Danish language to obtain even more knowledge about Danish culture. Whereas the Thai culture at the school is dedicated to give knowledge to non-Thai learners through practices such as cooking. However the learners share their cultures with each other which is a non-stopping process between an openness of attitude, an ability to learn, knowledge and finally knowing how to a certain extend.

The Mexican learner Victor believes that his contribution consists of the habits he brings from Mexico, but he is not sure what these habits are (Appendix D, min. 03:46 – 04:36). He rather decides to tell about the school system differences that he has noticed during the school year. From his interpretation the teachers at REC are relaxed and calm (Appendix D, min. 03:46 – 04:36). This has not only advantages quite the contrary; Victor the teacher could be more serious and grade every assignment, because he feels the teachers are undermining his efforts (Appendix D, min. 04:41 – 05:04). The contribution of him consists from his academical engagement, which can be a benefit to other learners when he shares his view on how to become a better student. This also shows that every learner as another knowledge about certain practices and their culture of origin might influence these practices. In the meantime of sharing knowledge and cultural practices the learners develop their social skills which they not only use in the rooms as it has been explained in the focus group. The aim of the boarding school is that learners are social all around the day, whereas Valentina uses her Danish language learning to show her host family interest in their culture (Appendix F, min. 01:56 – 02:26). This is one of the social skills that Valentina is uses as a contribution. At the school she contributes with social skills, when her Thai roommate asks for help with the Thai cooking (Appendix F, min. 04:44 – 04:52). Her development of intercultural competences has been in experiencing practices of other cultures and hereby gaining knowledge and even knowing how skills within the Thai cooking traditions. Hanna gave the impression that she would have needed more time for this question, because she mentions it to be a hard question (Appendix G, min. 05:17 – 05:45). Her answer does not involve her contribution alone, but she thinks that everyone can contribute with togetherness,

because everything all that happens at REC involves being together with other people (Appendix G, min. 05:17 – 05:45). The word togetherness has also been mentioned in the focus group and does at REC have a special meaning; it describes the culture that REC wants the learners to have. It brings the learners together and is part of the school's framework of "Inclusive Community and Learning" and "Participatory Democracy" (Ranum Efterskole College (a), 2014), which is essential when 450 young individuals have to live together. The acceptance that "Inclusive Community and Learning" and "Participatory Democracy" are important for the intercultural competence of attitude and value, because they are both responsible for an individual to be openminded and in conflict-free contact. Every culture is different when acceptance and recognition of each other is an ability to make an international and bilingual environment such as REC work.

4.3.5 Independence

The learners spend their time at REC without their parents, which means they have to take responsibility for their own actions. The stay at REC gives them the opportunity to learn from being on their own regarding the everyday life with everyday tasks such as laundry or cleaning. This is what Victor mentions when he is asked: "What benefits do you get from staying at the school?" (Appendix A). He responds that he has learned to depend on himself such as: "Yes I am pretty sure, at some point I will have to start living alone and I cannot go to my home and say "Mammi I have a fresh deal of laundry could you help me out?" (laughing) No" (Appendix D, min. 06:41 – 06:51). This independence is similar to what Faria experiences during her stay. She explains that she has learned to decide for herself and not wait for her parents to tell her what to do: " [...] first to have more responsibility, because here I am far from home and there is not, my parents cannot tell me what to do. Everything I have to decide on my own, what I am going to do. Every time I have got in trouble it is only me and myself [...]" (Appendix E, min. 11:20 – 13:56). The independence is relatable to the cultural knowledge that the learners are gaining, since Faria tells, that the travels with REC have taught her a lot about the world (Appendix E, min. 11:20 – 13:56). When she did know less she was more dependent on people around her, which has changed by understanding the differences of culture and being able to use the relational and interpretative skills of intercultural knowing how. The learner becomes more independent without the help of parents which might be an unusual situation for young teenagers (Appendix D, min. 06:11 – 06:36). Being independent also means, being mature to a certain extent, which is a result of the social relations and the cultural exchange of learning from each other about different practices.

Hanna and Valentina are answering the question about what benefits they get from knowledge related experiences, meaning that Valentina has benefitted from the language learning, while Hanna sees benefits in the academics. Valentina has become better at English, which gives her the independence of traveling and being able to speak with new people from other countries (Appendix F, min. 05:22 – 05:40). This gives her the opportunity to develop her intercultural competences, because she can intercultural communicate with individuals from foreign cultures. Hanna's experience builds on the opportunities that are given to her through her education at REC, because she sees that the education gives her tools and methods for her further studies, which means becoming more independent from a broader knowledge about how to do certain things (Appendix G, min. 05:57 – 07:29). From the interview with Hanna it appears that she is disappointed with average teachers and her teachers at REC are good (Appendix G, min. 05:57 – 07:29). Earlier she had mentioned the importance of the high level and how she appreciates the school's education, which might be different at REC, because she is challenged enough with both the IGCSE class and regular Danish 9th grade. She reflects upon her development: "Yes, I think also your personality changes a lot. You learn a lot. I was a really independent person beforehand and I get even more independent [...]" (Appendix G, min. 08:14 – 08:36). For Hanna the school does not carry the same challenges as for other learners, which becomes clearer when she recognizes that she has been an independent individual even before coming to REC. Most of the learners that have been interviewed explained how the stay at REC has been a benefit to their development of becoming independent individuals. Where Hanna has been through this stage of development and needs more challenges to change. The intercultural communication has a big part in the learners' development of intercultural competences which appear in different stages of the individual learner.

4.4 Reflection and discussion

The analysis explored the question "To what extent do learners develop intercultural communicative competences in a bilingual environment and how do they navigate between multiple cultures?" which as the research question was not about solving a problem, why it has been difficult to call it a problem formulation. The aim was to understand the social relations between the diverse cultures of the learners, in order to help Ranum Efterskole College to get an overview of the learners' development. The observations of the study gave an overall view of the school life and group dynamics seen as a society, where the focus group was able to tell about how they experience the group dynamics and especially the social life in the rooms. The individual interview gave the opportunity to talk with

international learners and how they perceive the school life as individuals. These three perspectives gave the research the possibility to get a macro and micro perspective on REC. Since the school has its own culture and the learners are settled in a place most of the time away from society, the school has also managed to create a society on its own. The focus group was mainly talking from a Danish learners' perspective. The research might have given different results when the individual interviews would have been conducted with teachers as participants, because they would probably have given a perspective from a professional side regarding the group dynamics. That would have changed the content of the research and the results would not have shown the learners' experience from as individuals, but the visible development of intercultural communicative competences (ICC) among the learners. The focus group would have been the only direct informants for the research about the learners' navigation between the multiple cultures, which would have been the group perspective but not from the each individual. Therefore, the decision to interview teachers or other staff members was not for consideration because it would have changed the researches content.

According to the participants, the interculturally mixed rooms in all five interviews a good idea to learn to respect otherness of individuals, be openminded to individuals and not judge new people (Appendix C; Appendix G). The room dynamics give the learners a knowing how competence, because they improve their intercultural communication when living so closely together. The development of the ICC prepares the young individuals for future culture meetings where they have to interact with people from foreign cultures. They learn to see an advantage in taking the time to get to know people they usually would not talk to, which can be seen as a part of developing ICC, because exactly the ICC is a part of getting better in valuing other cultures as well communicating interculturally. Therefore, it is important to explain that the learners improve their competences through the navigation between multiple cultures, which makes them grow to mature young individuals during the stay at REC because they understand the outcomes of their own social actions.

It is important to mention that every learner develops in a different pace which impacts the stage that each learner can reach of intercultural communicative competences. This might be impacted by the type of activities which the learner chooses. The cooking activity is focused on teaching the learners about a culture, while the sport activities are more focused on the activity itself. The more a learner is participating in activities, that are having a cultural side effect, the faster the learner might develop in the ICC, because he is interacting and navigating between learners who are willing to show cultural

practices. As far as I could observe the Thai cooking class was highly visited since there were no free chairs left when sitting together with the food. Valentina mentioned in her interview that other learners can also show their cuisine in the cooking class, which gives the Thai learners the opportunity to learn about other cultural cuisines (Appendix F).

However, the research question asks for an investigation of the development of learners, which is not a problem to solve much more it is a process to watch. The limitation of watching this process has been in the time that the research has been conducted in, which is one month of the winter season and two interviews in May. The best research would start with the beginning of the school year and would end closely to the end of the school year. One school year is the amount of time that each learner has to develop his competences that the school offers. The learners' development has become visible, as some of the learners in the interviews have explained that they are aware of their personal development such as Victor (Appendix D), Faria (Appendix E), Valentina (Appendix F) and Hanna (Appendix G). Since this study has a time restriction it was not possible to follow the whole process, but instead the research was done in the middle of the school year right after the learners' Culture trip, which is the longest trip out of the three trips (Appendix C).

Regarding the research, I saw my own short term stay at REC as a disadvantage, likewise the learners criticize some activities to not give enough time to explore a culture. These activities are for example the culture trip, which lasts two weeks of the entire school year. A learner in the interviews sees it as a disadvantage that the school does not give more culture trips to experience. He claims that it is not enough time. This might bring to thoughts what can the school do about the wish of learners who want to experience even more than the school is offering? The school has short term experiences for the learners spread over the school year because each trip needs preparations. The advantages of this management is that the experiences come in small pieces as the type of short term experiences, which influences the overall long term stay of the learners at REC. The short term experiences such as travels, activities and voluntary work are supportive to make the long term stay of one year more interesting because in this way the learners are able to process what they have learned throughout the specific experience. Hereby, they as well develop their ICC because almost every activity with the school is related to intercultural exchange and affected by the learners' navigation between the multiple cultures.

5 Conclusion

During my research the comments and statements from the Danish and international learners, who participated in interviews and communicated with me during the observation, gave understanding about the social life at REC and identified the school's cultural values. The construction of cultural experiences characterized the learners' navigation between the multiple cultures. The answers from the five conducted interviews underlined the views of the learners as well as the interviews gave insights to the group dynamics and the feelings of both Danish and international learners. The analysis was showing three perspectives by the observation, focus group interview and the four individual interviews, which has given the research a thought-through investigation about the learners development of ICC. Each analysis part has given results focused on the social interaction between the learners.

One result this study has shown that the school's encouragement of the social life among the learners uses the concept of togetherness that the young individuals remember, because they relate to it in regards to positive moments. Togetherness has been used as the name of the school's culture and shown the learners' understanding of a good social life and the joy of having common interests. Concluding, that the school arranges all social activities for the learners to make them interact as much as possible between the multiple cultures; the study has shown that the learners develop visible competences such as the independence and responsibility besides the ICC.

The difference between the learners expectations and what they can actual get out of the stay at REC have varied in the individual interviews which have shown the view of the learner as an individual; the high level of education can be the most important experience for one learner, while another can have the wish to experience a high level of social interaction and travels against a third learner who is focused about the cultural experiences and learning about practices of other learners. Each individual has the opportunity to follow his or her dream of the best year in his educational life. At the same time can comfortability be a factor of national grouping and English language as the main language and a reserved interaction as the observation has shown, which hinders shy learners to develop their ICC as much as confident learners can do. The school supports the learners' social participation by pushing them to interact and engage themselves by offering a large amount of activities. Every participation of the learner develops their ICC when interacting with learners who are from another culture, which also means that the development of ICC in the bilingual environment is a results of

the learners' navigation between the multiple cultures. During the school year the learner will develop independence which can be seen as the final stage of developing the ICC's ability of knowing how, since the learners become aware of experiencing independent improvement through the everyday routines of the life without parents and with other young individuals who are different from themselves. This is relevant for their future when meeting people from foreign cultures, because the learner has developed the competence to communicate intercultural and having a pre-understanding of the differences in cultures.

This study's discussion and reflection have shown the consequences of the researches arranged time, which has enlightened results about the researches time limitations. The learners development of ICC has been evaluated from the qualitative data sets and given understanding about the diverse development depending on the learners stage of knowledge about a targeted culture. Whereas their navigation between multiple cultures has been evaluated as a standard element of an everyday at REC impacting the ICC's development by the learners' intercultural communication. Depending on in which degree the learner uses intercultural communication does the learner develop his ICC.

Furthermore, the study shows results of the learners advantages and disadvantages of cultural improvement within the long term stay, which has been impacted by short term experiences distributed across the school year. Regarding the learners wish for more travels focused on culture the school should consider to give learners the opportunity to choose three culture travels instead of one culture travels and two profile travels. Beyond that, the school could offer more subjects related to culture, which gives each learner the opportunity to choose more than one cultural subject with the aim to work on academic projects related to a culture of interest. All in all, the school does already offer a large amount of subjects and cultural experiences through the activities and out-of-class life at REC. Therefore, it is difficult to propose changes for the school's program apart from giving the learners the opportunity to experience even more activities with a focus on culture.

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