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“I Don’t Want to be Stereotypical, but...”: Norwegian EFL Learners’ Awareness of and Willingness to Challenge Visual Stereotypes



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Abstract

This article reports on a study that investigated Norwegian upper secondary pupils’ visual stereotypes, as well as their awareness of and willingness to challenge these stereotypes before and after participating in an educational intervention. In the intervention, critical visual literacy was introduced as one approach to teaching about culture in three English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. Over the course of 16 weeks, the pupils were engaged in tasks that required them to reflect on visual stereotypes embedded in commonplace ways of representing the world, the origins of these stereotypes, their socio-political consequences, and ways of promoting social justice through taking informed action. Focus group interviews conducted with 30 pupils before and after the intervention comprise the main data set for the current article. These were supplemented by texts produced by the pupils during the intervention. The results of the study showed that the pupils were less inclined to explicitly stereotype based on ethnicity or religion after the intervention. The pupils also displayed an increased awareness of stereotyping as a process, which led some of the groups to challenge specific stereotypes and one group to challenge the process of stereotyping in general. These findings are encouraging for EFL teaching, where one of the aims is to encourage greater understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Stereotypes, critical visual literacy, EFL education, intercultural communication.

Introduction

The current small-scale study explores Norwegian upper secondary EFL pupils’ visual stereotypes, as well as their awareness of and willingness to challenge these stereotypes before and after participating in an educational intervention. Through new communication technologies available to a majority of people living in the Western world, ideas and information in visual form circulate globally at an unprecedented speed and scope (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 1). This is also the case for EFL

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classrooms, where pupils experience other cultures through a variety of visual media, such as textbooks, online videos, and movies. Consequently, visual media are important sources of information when pupils construct their knowledge about and understanding of other cultures.

Simultaneously, any reading of an image, here understood as including all visual texts, is deeply rooted in the viewers' previous knowledge, belief systems and cultural references (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 49). These often take the form of stereotypes. When we try to create an idea of who a person is without getting to know them intimately, "we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads" (Lippmann, 1922/2017, pp. 88-89). Images might therefore enforce stereotypes, while stereotypes simultaneously influence the meaning taken from images, as we read both from and into them. This is not always a conscious process that readers are able to critically reflect on. Rather, "because images appear to offer a direct, unmediated view of the reality they depict, they tend to be taken as credible representations of that reality" (Sherwin, 2008, p. 184).

According to the national curriculum in Norway (LK06), the English subject should aim to "promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013, p. 2). Research on visual representations of cultures and ethnicity in different media, including EFL textbooks (e.g. Brown & Habegger-Conti, 2017; Poindexter, 2011; Taylor-Mendez, 2009), suggests that if readers are not critical towards the images they are exposed to, they may obtain knowledge about other cultures and/or ethnic groups that reinforces stereotypes and encourages a dichotomy between "us" and "them." The essentialising effect of stereotypes (Hall, 2013, p. 247) is problematic in the interaction between people of diverse cultures, often referred to as intercultural communication, because it does not account for the plurality of individuals' identities (Dervin, 2012).

One approach to raising awareness of the ways images communicate is through critical visual literacy (CVL), which in this study is understood as an approach to images that focuses on uncovering the social interests and power relationships embedded in the production, reading, and challenging of images (Rose, 2001, p. 3). CVL builds on the principle that all images are constructed, that they are never neutral, but instead work to position the readers to accept a certain version of the "truth" (Janks, Dixon, Ferreira, Granville, & Newfield, 2014). CVL provides "strategies for making these workings conscious" (Newfield, 2011, p. 92), allowing the reader to decide whether or not they want to take up the position on offer.

Based on this, an educational intervention was designed in which CVL was introduced as an approach to teaching about cultures within a non-essentialist framework, viewing cultures as complex, dynamic and with blurred boundaries (Holliday, 2011, p. 5), in three Norwegian upper secondary EFL classrooms. Focus group interviews conducted with pupils before and after the intervention were analysed in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What stereotypes, if any, can be identified in the group discussions before and after the intervention?
2. Is the pupils' awareness of visual stereotypes displayed in group discussions before and after the intervention, and if so in which ways?
3. Is the pupils' willingness to challenge visual stereotypes displayed in group discussions before and after the intervention, and if so in which ways?

Through its unique positioning at the intersection of CVL and EFL teaching, the study establishes and explores the connection between CVL and the foreign language classroom. With its focus on

instructional effects of the CVL approach on stereotyping, as well as acknowledging and challenging visual stereotypes about culture(s), this research aims to contribute to the growing pool of studies investigating the link between critical literacy or visual literacy and fostering intercultural communication in foreign language teaching.

Theoretical background and previous research

The current study defines a stereotype as “a belief about a group of individuals” (Kanahara, 2006, p. 318), and the process of stereotyping as “the application of a belief about a group of individuals to an individual from the group” (p. 314). This definition does not differentiate between positive and negative, simple and complex stereotypes, which is consistent with a non-essentialist approach to cultures. Research within experimental psychology (Devine, 1989) has shown that both low and high prejudice people are equally knowledgeable about stereotypes, and that both groups automatically retrieve these stereotypes when encountering an individual from a stereotyped group. The difference between these groups is the willingness to inhibit these automatically activated stereotypes, a process which Devine (1989) argues requires both time and conscious effort. Categorizing and stereotyping groups of people is therefore a natural and automatic process and impeding this process requires both awareness and willingness to “stop short-circuiting critical thinking” (Perkins, 1979).

CVL can be used as an approach to raising awareness of this process, as it acknowledges “that texts work to position us, and that this happens below the level of consciousness” (Newfield, 2011, p. 92). Building on critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical literacy, CVL goes beyond understanding and analysing visual texts as it interrogates images’ role in shaping individuals’ and groups’ attitudes, beliefs and values, with the aim of promoting social justice (Chung, 2013, pp. 4-6). Four interrelated dimensions of critical literacy practices can be outlined, namely disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking informed action (Lewison, Flint & van Sluys, 2002; Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2015). Two of these dimensions are particularly relevant for the current intervention. Firstly, in order to build awareness of the role of stereotyping in relation to seeing, it is necessary to disrupt the commonplace, view the world through new lenses, and question what is considered “normal.” Secondly, through focusing on the dimension of taking informed action, the pupils can become aware of their agency in relation to accepting or rejecting stereotypes and challenging the way they view the world with the aim of promoting social justice.

Several studies have addressed the use of different approaches to reducing stereotyping in the English classroom. These include cultural portfolios (Su, 2011), systematic reflection on visual media (Forsman, 2010), and critical literacy practices (Lau, Juby-Smith, & Desbiens, 2017). This research suggests that it is possible for instruction to have an influence on pupils’ perception and understanding of stereotypes, allowing them to modify and reconsider their previous assumptions. While findings by Lau et al. (2017, p. 120) suggest a tendency for the pupils to become “more socially conscious about the importance to (self-) interrogate taken-for-granted social beliefs,” Su (2011) and Forsman (2010) found that the insights gained were mainly attached to the specific stereotypes addressed. There is therefore still a need for research that addresses more general approaches to inhibiting stereotyping, as opposed to focusing on awareness of specific (national) stereotypes, as well as research that addresses the use of CVL for this purpose in an EFL context. Additionally, previous research has focused on primary school pupils, or university students, rather than upper secondary school pupils. The current study attempts to contribute towards filling these gaps.

Methodology

This small-scale study was conducted as a part of the author's doctoral research, which aims to investigate how Norwegian upper secondary pupils approach the reading of images depicting other cultures before and after being introduced to CVL. For this purpose, an intervention was designed in which CVL was incorporated as an approach to teaching about cultures in the EFL classroom. The current study draws upon parts of the total data set, as described in the following. Ethical permission was granted by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data for the collection of data and informed consent was gathered from the individual participants.

Participants and context

The participants in the intervention were selected through convenience sampling and consisted of 83 pupils (38 girls and 45 boys) from three EFL classes at the same upper secondary school in a medium-sized city on the west coast of Norway. The classes were a compulsory part of their first year of general studies. At the start of the intervention, the majority of the pupils were aged between fifteen and sixteen and their expected English proficiency level was around B1/B2 (Council of Europe, 2007), although individual variations were observed. The three classes' regular teachers' were involved in the intervention.

Pedagogical approach and procedures

The intervention ran over a period of 16 weeks. During this time, the four dimensions of CVL practices were integrated into the three EFL classes, as one of several approaches to teaching about culture(s). Before the intervention, the researcher developed a selection of tasks designed to address a number of learning aims created specifically for the intervention, anchored in the theoretical discussion of CVL and the national curriculum for teaching English (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013). These were:

The visually critically literate reader should:

1. Be aware of their own visual stereotypes and how these work
2. Recognize that all texts are partial re-presentations of the world
3. Be able to interrogate multiple perspectives
4. Recognize the role of images in society
5. Recognize how the choices made by image makers and users position the viewer to respond in particular ways
6. Be able to see how texts can be re-designed in order to give a more just representation of the world

Over the course of the intervention, the pupils were therefore engaged in tasks that required them to reflect on the role of visual stereotypes in commonplace ways of representing the world (aim 1), the origins of these stereotypes (aims 1 and 2), their socio-political consequences (aims 4 and 5), and ways of promoting social justice through taking informed action (aim 6). As the teachers took a topic-based approach to the curriculum, the tasks were also designed to fit within the topics covered during the intervention period, namely "stereotypes, indigenous people and multiculturalism," "politics and multiculturalism," and "race and class." Taking a social constructivist view of learning and knowledge, the tasks focused on encouraging the active co-construction of meaning, either through full class or group/pair discussions, on learning rather than performance, and with the teachers/researcher functioning as facilitators and guides rather than instructors (Adams, 2006, p. 247). In addition to

focusing on visual stereotypes in general, the pupils also worked with their own specific visual stereotypes, as well as those of their peers (aim 1) through asking the pupils to identify visual stereotypes embedded in images and using these as a starting point for critical reflection.

During the intervention, the researcher met weekly with the three teachers to discuss the tasks, which were then implemented in one of two ways. When accompanying lectures were provided in relation to the task, the researcher held these and introduced the task in an auditorium with all three classes attending simultaneously. Otherwise, the tasks were implemented in the classrooms by the teachers. To reduce variability and potential influence of individual teaching styles, the greatest part of the instruction was provided by the researcher. In total, 12 tasks were implemented, taking up about 9 hours (20% of the total teaching time for the subject in the period). An overview of the tasks can be found in Appendix 1.

Data collection

Two data sets were used for this study. The main data set consists of transcripts of focus group interviews, analysed with the aim of answering the three research questions. In addition to this, a supplementary data set consisting of pupil texts produced during the intervention have been included in order to enrich the understanding of the interview data, and more clearly link them to the instruction.

Focus group interviews

Thirty pupils (13 girls and 17 boys) divided into five groups of six were selected for focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were conducted at the beginning of the intervention and immediately afterwards (referred to as pre- and post-interviews in the following). The interviews were semi-structured and based on five tasks, but only the task eliciting the data for the current article will be elaborated on in the following (see also Appendix 2 for the interview guide). This task, named “Who will have which job and why?”, has been taken from “A toolkit of activities to measure attitudinal change” (RISC, n.d.). Six photographs, provided in the toolkit, were used as prompts. These depicted six teenagers, one male and one female from three different ethnicities. When referring to the different photographs in the following, the terms used by RISC will be applied, namely Asian, European and African ethnicity. This also correlates well with the terms applied by the pupils during the interviews. No reference was made to the photographed teenagers’ ethnicities or their countries of residence by the interviewer before or during the task. The photographs are all portraits, each depicting one teenager from the shoulders up, smiling and looking straight at the viewer.

In the pre-interviews, the pupils were asked to give a brief description of each teenager in the photographs, including what type of job they thought each person might have in the future. Following this, they were given eight job titles written on cards (builder, farmer, doctor, nurse, teacher, scientist, computers and cleaner) and asked to assign one job title to each person. In the post-interviews, the pupils were not asked to describe the teenagers before being given the job titles, but were instead given hobbies (basketball, shopping, social media, singing, chess, reading, gymnastics, and gaming) to assign in addition to the job titles. The closed nature of this task encourages the use of stereotypes, thus enabling investigation of the pupils’ willingness or reluctance towards engaging in this type of process. Simultaneously, however, it might limit the transferability of the results, as it might not provide an accurate indication of the pupils’ inclination to stereotype in general. This also applies to the use of interview data generally, as they are not naturally occurring events.

The interviews were conducted in English, which could be considered a limitation as it is not the pupils’ first language. However, the pupils’ level of English was generally high, and they were also given the

opportunity to use Norwegian when needed to ensure a more accurate expression of ideas. Other limitations include the external and internal framing of the interviews, which are likely to influence the type of discussions elicited from them and means that they cannot necessarily be considered “a window to people’s true opinions” (Marková, Linell, Grossen, & Orvig, 2007, p. 90). These will be discussed in more detail in the following, but also include the possible influences on the pupils’ responses caused by the researcher being both actively involved in the pedagogical side of the intervention and facilitating the focus group interviews.

The choice of focus group interviews as the main data collection method for this study is grounded in the researcher’s philosophical position within social constructivism, whereby individuals’ knowledge is seen as being constructed through social interactions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 28-29). Focus group interviews encourage dialogue, which is central to social constructivist research. The opportunities for co-construction of knowledge also better reflects the interaction patterns employed throughout the intervention than for example individual interviews. Additionally, group interviews are often experienced as less threatening for young research participants than individual interviews (Eder & Fingerson, 2002, p. 183). The advantages of focus group interviews were therefore considered to outweigh the possible limitations. The pupil texts also provide insight into individual understandings, balancing out the limitations of the interview data.

The interviews were audio and video recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Cues from video recordings, such as pointing and placing of job titles, were then included in the transcription. In total, the transcriptions of this task in all the five groups pre- and post-intervention (86 of a total of 511 minutes of audio and video recordings) comprise the interview data for this study. The transcription conventions used can be found in Appendix 3.

Pupil texts

The supplementary pupil text data set consists of 115 texts produced during the lessons in relation to three classroom tasks that focused on visual stereotypes. All the texts submitted by the 62 pupils who had consented to the use of their texts for the study have been included in the data set; however, not all pupils completed or submitted each task. The data set therefore consists of 45 texts written in response to questions related to the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), 16 texts written as an optional task on an exam in response to the Montage task, and 54 texts consisting of a drawn redesign of an advertisement, accompanied by an explanation, made for the task *Race in Advertisements*. Through these tasks, the pupils explored visual stereotypes related to Asian ethnicity, indigenous peoples, and African ethnicity respectively (see Appendix 4 for details about the tasks).

Data analysis

Multiple qualitative analytical methods were applied, thus increasing the rigor and trustworthiness through triangulation (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 575). The main analytical approach drew on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, and the interview data was coded systematically using the qualitative analysis software NVivo (version 12.4). Both deductive codes that were identified theoretically prior to analysis and inductive codes that were identified empirically from the data material itself were employed in the analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 565). Following the initial coding process, codes were sorted into potential broader level themes and a thematic map was developed (see Table 1 for an overview of the codes and themes). Codes and themes were constantly revisited, defined and redefined in an iterative process throughout the analysis. Finally, the entire data set was re-read in order to make sure all the relevant data was coded in the respective themes and individual extracts and cases were selected for deeper analysis.

Elements from a Goffman-inspired interaction analysis were incorporated to account for the influence of the social context of the focus group interviews (Halkier, 2010). This includes the idea that people in social interactions attempt to sustain their performance and direct the impressions formed of them by others (Goffman, 1971, p. xi), that they are concerned with maintaining their own face and that of others (Goffman, 1967/2003, p. 7), as well as the contextual frame of the interaction shaping what can or cannot, should or should not be said or done in any specific situation (Goffman, 1986). Following Marková et al. (2007), both the external framing, such as the timing and place of the interview, instructions given, etc., and internal framing, i.e. how the discourse is developed by the participants during the interaction, were considered.

Finally, the codes and themes were quantified, both in order to give a more objective representation of the frequencies and to search for patterns in the data (Sandelowski, 2001, p. 232). In particular, this was applied to compare the pre- and post-interviews. An overview of the themes and codes applied and developed can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Overview of themes and codes applied in the analysis

Theme	Codes	Explanation
Explicit displays of stereotyping <i>Deductive</i> Instances of stereotyping, as defined by Kanahara (2006)	Ethnic/religious stereotypes <i>Inductive</i>	Explicit displays of stereotyping where the group is defined based on ethnicity and/or religion
	Gender stereotypes <i>Inductive</i>	Explicit displays of stereotyping where the group is defined based on gender
	Other stereotypes <i>Inductive</i>	Explicit displays of stereotyping where the group is defined based on profession
Stereotype awareness <i>Deductive</i> Instances where the pupils display some awareness of the concept of stereotyping	Acknowledging specific <i>Deductive</i>	Explicit displays of acknowledging a stereotype in a specific instance
	Acknowledging general <i>Deductive</i>	Explicit displays of acknowledging the process of stereotyping in general
	Challenging specific <i>Deductive</i>	Explicit displays of challenging a specific stereotype
	Challenging general <i>Deductive</i>	Explicit displays of challenging the process of stereotyping in general
	Challenging task <i>Inductive</i>	Explicit displays of challenging the task, or the process of stereotyping implied by the task

Subsequent to the analysis of the interview data, the pupil text data set was analysed deductively, applying a subset of the codes. The codes applied in the analysis of this data set have been shaded in Table 1. As the stereotypes elicited through the tasks were not the pupils' own stereotypes, but rather stereotypes they identified in the different images, codes related to explicit displays of stereotyping were not applied. Results from this analysis were used to supplement the main data set, adding clarifications of findings from the interview data as well as linking the results to the intervention.

Results and discussion

As the two themes, explicit displays of stereotyping and stereotype awareness, are related to research question 1, and 2 and 3 respectively, they will be presented and discussed separately in the following.

Explicit displays of stereotyping

In order to answer the first research question, the interview data was analysed with the aim of identifying explicit displays of stereotyping. Based on the content of the stereotype, three codes were identified and applied in the analysis (Table 2).

Table 2 Overview of codes applied in the theme “explicit displays of stereotyping”

Code	Example
Ethnic/religious stereotypes	Tiana: Like, from what I know...most like people from, I don't know, middle east or like other types of countries that she's from they want to become doctors or something, because like it's the...one of the best jobs. So I think like she [referring to the Asian female] wants to become a doctor. <i>Group 1, pre-interview</i>
Gender stereotypes	Alexander: Most men go into computer-ish fields. <i>Group 1, pre-interview</i>
Other stereotypes	Oscar: [...] I think he reminds me of a... computer technician at least. All he needs are the glasses... and ... then he is the... stereotypical. <i>Group 2, pre-interview</i>

Table 3 shows the number and distribution of the statements in the different codes. A notable change from the pre- to the post-interviews is the substantial reduction in explicit displays of stereotyping in relation to ethnic/religious groups. This indicates a positive result from the intervention, as stereotypes related to ethnicity were explicitly addressed and previous research has shown that addressing stereotypes can enable the pupils to re-evaluate their previous assumptions about cultures (Forsman, 2010; Su, 2011). Simultaneously, there was an increase in the number of gender stereotypes in the post-interviews. This could have been due to the external framing of the interviews, as the place (school) and time (during lesson hours) might have encouraged a classroom-like interaction (Marková *et al.*, 2007, p. 88), in which the pupils are generally encouraged to complete the task given to them. As the task encourages the use of stereotypes, the pupils might have felt it necessary to do this, regardless of their inclination to stereotype in other situations. However, it is interesting that, in the post-interviews, they increasingly resorted to the kinds of stereotypes that were not explicitly addressed during the intervention (i.e. gender stereotypes).

The number of statements in the three codes related to the individual ethnicities is displayed in Table 4, and reveals that the majority of the ethnic/religious stereotypes were related to the Asian or the African ethnicities. The largest reduction in number of ethnic/religious stereotypes was related to the Asian ethnicity. Interestingly, the European teenagers were rarely stereotyped based on ethnicity and were the only ones stereotyped (exclusively) based on gender. The gender stereotypes were mainly related to the job title of “computers” in connection to the European male.

Table 1 Number of statements in the different codes based on groups, in pre- and post-interviews

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Total	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post								
Ethnic/religious stereotypes	4	1	0	0	5	3	2	2	3	2	14	8
Gender stereotypes	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
Other stereotypes	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	2
Total	6	3	2	1	5	3	2	3	3	4	18	14

Table 4 Number of statements in the different codes based on ethnicity of the stereotyped group, in pre- and post-interviews

	Asian		European		African	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Ethnic/religious stereotypes	10	3	1	1	7	5
Gender stereotypes	0	0	0	4	0	0
Other stereotypes	1	1	2	0	0	1
Total	11	4	3	5	7	6

The prominent stereotype presented in relation to the Asian teenagers was that they are “very smart, clever,” and have “high ambitions” (Anna, pre-interview). This stereotype was present in both the pre- and post-interviews. In the pre-interviews, an additional stereotype of the Asian female was that she is oppressed “because in their culture [...] the men decide how the woman is going to live” (Monica, pre-interview). Neither of these stereotypes were explicitly addressed in the intervention. However, the pupils worked with many other Asian stereotypes present in the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*. Through working within the dimensions of CVL, the pupils were encouraged to look past the surface level of the text and images in the novel, and question how racism can be encouraged through stereotypes, as illustrated in the following quotation from a text written by Monica in response to the novel:

They [referring to the protagonist’s (Jin’s) classmates] are relatively racists because of their prejudices. They have assumptions and pictures of how they think Chinese people are, and act out of them.

Monica, pupil texts

Through critically reading both the images and the text, the pupils identified how the “assumptions and pictures” of Asians have real-life consequences. Other pupils also pointed to how “no-one makes an effort to correct the students’ racist tendencies” (Ellinor, pupil texts), indicating that they see a possibility for taking informed action (Lewison et al., 2002). The reduction in Asian stereotypes in the post-interviews could therefore be a result of an increased understanding of the problems related to Asian stereotypes in general.

A stereotype about Africans identified in the pre-interviews was that they come “from a poor family and a poor country [...] with no education” (Kenneth, pre-interview). However, they were also stereotyped as being hard-working, wanting to better their lives and “help the next generation” (Anna,

pre-interview). In the post-interview, no reference was made to poverty, and there was only one explicit stereotype related to having low education. Instead, the African male was stereotyped as being “good at basketball” (Tiana, post-interview), likely encouraged by the addition of the hobby “basketball” in the post-interviews. During the intervention, the pupils worked with African stereotypes through the task *Race in advertisement*. In this task, the pupils focused on the power imbalances between “white” and “black” people, connected this to the history of slavery as well as the stereotype of the athletic African. Through redesigning the advertisement, the pupils demonstrated how they used this awareness to take informed action (Lewison et al., 2002), by for example removing “the sprinters who were a metaphor for fast computers, because you can advertise fast computers without stereotyping people” (Eva, pupil texts). However, the reduction in number of explicit displays of stereotyping in relation to the African ethnicity is considerably smaller than in connection to the Asian. This could imply that working with American Born Chinese had a greater effect on the pupils than the advertisement, possibly due to the differences inherent in the two media, the type of questions asked, or the time for reflection allowed after the task.

In addition to a reduction in number and the changes in content outlined above, several differences in the form in which the stereotypes were presented were also identified between the pre- and the post-interviews. Firstly, a change in footing (Goffman, 1981) can be noted. Whereas the pupils frequently marked their position as subjective in the pre-interviews, as identified through “I think,” or “I feel,” they often invoked other voices in the post-interviews (Marková et al., 2007). This change of footing can, for example, be noted in the case of Tiana, who in the pre-interview marked her position as subjective through the use of “I feel”:

Tiana: Because I feel like most like... ehh, people that come from other countries they want to like want the best job [...]
Group 1, pre-interview

In the post-interview, rather than speaking from a subjective position, Tiana invoked the “voice of common sense” (Marková et al., 2007, p. 124):

Tiana: Because ehh... black people are considered to be good at basketball, so yes.
Group 1, post-interview

She also invoked other voices: “when we... like see movies and stuff they are like playing more base... basketball” (Tiana, post-interview). On the one hand, the subjective position tones down the statement, opening up the possibility that not everyone adheres to it (Marková et al., 2007, p. 127). In that sense, the change in footing could be interpreted as a decrease in hedging. However, the pupils might also have brought in other voices as a way of distancing themselves from the statement, letting “others” advocate the position, without having to commit to this position themselves (Marková et al., 2007, p. 157).

Another change is the complexity of the statements containing explicit displays of stereotyping. Whereas the statements in the pre-interviews were generally quite elaborate, the stereotypes in the post-interviews were mostly short and with few or no explanations attached. Additionally, these simple statements frequently contained an acknowledgement of the specific stereotype: “being stereotypical, ehm... a lot of [...] guys from India... are doctors” (Leon, post-interview). These acknowledgements might indicate that the pupils were guiding the interviewer’s and the other participants’ impression of them (Goffman, 1971), by demonstrating that they were aware of what they were doing. In combination with positioning themselves at a personal distance from their statements, this could create an impression that the pupils were just completing the task due to the classroom-like external framing

of the interview (Marková et al., 2007, p. 88). They might therefore have been producing the type of statements expected by the task, while not necessarily committing to this position themselves.

Stereotype awareness

In order to answer research questions 2 and 3, the data set was coded for instances of acknowledging (indicating awareness) and challenging (indicating willingness) stereotypes, following Devine (1989). Following Forsman (2010), these were further divided into addressing specific instances of stereotyping and stereotyping in general. As both acknowledging and challenging stereotypes necessarily implies an awareness, these codes have all been included in the theme “stereotype awareness.” Some challenges were also directed at the task itself. These were coded in the inductive code “challenge, task” and have been included in this theme as they challenge the process of stereotyping implied by the task. Examples of statements in the different codes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 *Overview of themes related to stereotype awareness*

Code	Example
Acknowledging specific	Leon: Ehh, being stereotypical ehm... a lot of like Indian... maybe Indian guys from India... are doctors. <i>Group 4, post-interview</i>
Acknowledging general	Robert: The... the only thing I can use to like place these different hobbies and jobs is stereotypes, I feel so... <i>Group 4, post-interview</i>
Challenging specific	Monica: Just because he is white doesn't mean that he has money. <i>Group 3, post-interview</i>
Challenging general	Monica: So I think it's wrong to place... ehm... to just go for, well stereotyping. <i>Group 3, post-interview</i>
Challenging task	Kristian: Don't really know it's... kind of hard to base it on the look. <i>Group 5, post interview</i>

Table 6 shows the number and distribution of the coded statements related to this theme. Some of the statements have been double-coded, as they addressed more than one aspect of stereotype awareness (e.g., Robert's statement in Table 6 was coded as both “acknowledging general”, and “challenge task”). In total, more than twice as many statements were coded in this theme in the post-interviews, compared to the pre-interviews. In particular, there was a marked increase in the codes “acknowledging specific” and “challenging task.”

Table 6 Number of coded statements within the themes related to stereotype awareness based on groups, in pre- and post-interviews

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		Total	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post								
Acknowledge												
specific	0	1	3	2	2	1	0	3	0	3	5	10
Acknowledge												
general	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
Challenge specific	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	1
Challenge general	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Challenge task	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	2	0	2	2	7
Total	2	1	3	3	4	8	0	6	1	5	10	23

The acknowledgements of specific stereotypes often preceded or followed explicit displays of stereotyping in the post-interviews, indicating that even though some of the pupils still stereotyped explicitly, they had an increased awareness of what stereotyping is and how it is connected to reading images. In the post-interviews, some of the specific acknowledgements were included the phrase “I don’t want to be stereotypical, but...”, as in the following statement made in relation to the African female:

Sofie: I don’t know, I don’t want to be stereotypical, but I feel like she... looks like a cleaner.
Group 2, post-interview

Here, Sofie signalled not only that she was aware that her statement “she looks like a cleaner” could be perceived as stereotypical but also that this is something with which she did not want to be associated. Such statements indicate either that the pupils did not want to be stereotypical but were struggling to complete the task without the use of stereotypes, or, at the very least, that they did not want to be perceived as being stereotypical. The first interpretation indicates that they were concerned about who they are, reflecting a change in willingness to be stereotypical, while the second indicates that they were guiding the other participants’ impression of them (Goffman, 1971). From a non-essentialist approach to culture, the first would be preferable as willingness is a necessary precondition for impeding the automatic process of stereotyping (Devine, 1989). However, although both awareness and willingness are required in order to inhibit stereotypes, challenging does not automatically follow as it requires time and conscious effort (Devine, 1989). Statements including “I don’t want to be stereotypical, but...” could therefore indicate that the pupils were struggling to move from awareness, and perhaps also willingness, to taking action and challenging.

The struggle to complete the task without the use of stereotypes is also evident in the challenges directed at the task. All but one group displayed an increase in explicit task challenges from the pre- to the post-interviews (Table 6). This could indicate that the pupils were more aware of the “lack of information” in images (Benjamin, pupil texts), and the difficulty, or even impossibility, of making assumptions when they “don’t know them” (Caroline, post-interview). However, the classroom-like external framing of the interview (Marková et al., 2007) could have had an influence on the extent to which the pupils felt that challenging the task was appropriate in that situation. As the pupils got to know the researcher better during the intervention, they might have felt more comfortable challenging the task in the post-interviews, which also needs to be considered as a possible interpretation.

The increased awareness of stereotyping as a process can be linked to the intervention through the pupils' texts, as in the following excerpt written by one of the pupils about the montage analysed in the Montage task:

This text does not give a fair impression about who the indigenous people are and it can cause more stereotyping.

Benjamin, pupil texts

In this excerpt, Benjamin displayed a recognition of the role of images in relation to stereotyping, focusing both on the (lack of) promotion of social justice and its role in shaping people's attitudes (Chung, 2013, p. 6) towards indigenous people. Other pupils also displayed their attitude towards stereotyping. Several stated that although it is "normal," it is not necessarily needed "because you can advertise fast computers without stereotyping people" (Eva, pupil texts). In their redesigns, both of the montage and the advertisements, the pupils generally challenged the stereotypes presented in the images, choosing instead to provide more nuanced representations. Through disrupting commonplace ways of thinking about the world (Lewison et al., 2002), the pupils appeared to become more aware that stereotypes are not necessary, and that these can be challenged, which appears to point to a clear link between instruction and performance on the task in the post-interviews.

Acknowledging stereotyping in general was identified in Group 3's pre-interview. This occurred after a pupil-initiated activity in which the group sorted the photographs based on who they thought would have low, middle, or high education. During the activity, the pupils made many explicit displays of stereotyping, but exhibited no stereotype awareness. The final distribution made by the group included the European male and female in the high level of education group, the Asian male and female in middle education, and the African male and female in the low education group. Once the distribution was made, the following exchange took place:

Tobias: Well it's like... it's funny, because... if we see them now... the o... the ones who has the white skin...

Stefan: Yeah.

Tobias: Gets the good education, but with the one who have dark skin gets the worst. And those with the middle education have like... in between dark and white.

[...]

Stefan: Ehh... if we like just... being stereotypical, it seems like those who's have the lighter skin... gets the better education.

[...]

Monica: We already have stereotypes about people cause we have heard different... things from different persons, and it's like you categorize... [Laughter]

Int.: Yeah?

Monica: People from their skin colours.

Int.: Mhm.

Monica: So we already have a... thought of... yes.

Group 3, pre-interview

In this exchange, Tobias started by bringing the group's attention to the fact that their beliefs about the level of education coincided with the skin colour of the people in the photograph. Stefan then introduced the concept of stereotyping to explain this (acknowledging specific). This was followed by Monica acknowledging the use of stereotypes in general, showing a level of sophistication in her understanding of the concept (i.e., stereotypes as pre-conceived understanding of people, and

stereotypes as categorization). The sequence of the student-initiated activity and the displays of stereotype awareness could indicate that although both Stefan and Monica were aware of the concept of stereotypes before the pre-interviews, they did not immediately connect this to the task. In fact, it was only after seeing the photographs laid out in that way (refer to Tobias' comment: "when we see them now") that they were able to recognize the stereotypical pattern of their decisions. It would therefore appear that the pupils co-constructed new knowledge through the exchange by building on each other's statements and thus together arriving at new realizations (Marková et al., 2007, p. 65). Seeing the photographs through new lenses (Lewison et al., 2002) allowed them to take a step back and question what they had previously considered normal.

There were individual differences between the groups in the number of displays of stereotype awareness, both in the pre- and post-interviews. Whereas an increase can be found in Groups 3, 4, and 5, Group 1 had a decrease in the number of stereotype awareness and no change was found in Group 2 (Table 6). One possible explanation for this is the relatively low number of explicit displays of stereotyping present in Group 1 in the post-interviews and in Group 2 in both pre- and post-interviews (see Table 3), providing less reason and fewer opportunities for displaying awareness.

Specific and general challenges towards stereotypes were sparse in both the pre- and post-interviews. Furthermore, in cases where the pupils did challenge stereotypes presented by others, this was generally performed hesitantly. The following example is from the post-interview in Group 3, where Stefan guessed that the European male would have the hobby of gaming because he was "white" and therefore "had money." Monica immediately laughed, and upon being asked why she laughed and if she disagreed, she explained:

- Monica:** Ehh... ehh... it's just like it's stereotyping. Like we always do. It's like the same as we think that she [points at the Asian female] is a cleaner because she is... a Muslim.
- Int.:** Mhm.
- Monica:** And we often think that Muslims are... employed for jobs that we don't want ourselves.
- [...]
- Int.:** So you think the fact that he put gaming on him [points at the European male] because he has money is a stereotype?
- Monica:** Yes.
- Int.:** Yeah, mhm.
- Monica:** Just because he is white doesn't mean that he has money.
- Int.:** No?
- Monica:** And just because someone is black it doesn't mean that they don't have money.
- Group 3, post-interview*

In her first statement, Monica hesitated (marked by two instances of "ehh" followed by a short break), indicating reluctance or discomfort (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 72). Rather than answering whether she disagreed with Stefan's comment, she stated that his comment was an instance of stereotyping, followed by a statement on stereotypes in general as well as an example of a different stereotype. Only after the interviewer asked Monica directly whether she thought Stefan's statement was a stereotype did she challenge it.

Her resistance towards challenging Stefan could be interpreted as a concern about maintaining her fellow pupils' face (Goffman, 1967/2003), which could have contributed to the scarcity of challenges towards stereotypes. In an interaction, agreement is generally the preferred response to a statement and

disagreement is seen as unpleasant, risking insult (Pomerantz, 1984). Moreover, even if the pupils had the awareness and willingness necessary to inhibit the process of stereotyping, thus challenging their own stereotypes, it does not necessarily follow that this would be done explicitly.

One group challenged the use of stereotypes in general in the post-interviews. This was done by Monica, when she was asked directly if she wished to place a job title or a hobby:

Monica: I don't think that these pictures can tell us anything about... who they are going to be when they... in the future, because we just get a... picture of them, so everyone can be everything.

Int.: Mhm.

Monica: So I think it's wrong to place... ehm... to just go for, well stereotyping.

Int.: Mhm.

Monica: So, I don't know because... she [points at the Asian female] could be a basketball player and she [points at the African female] could be a builder, but we don't know because we don't know them.

Int.: No.

Monica: So I think it's difficult to just... place some... jobs for them.

Group 3, post-interview

In this extract, Monica challenged the task in several ways, starting by stating that she did not think that the pictures could tell them anything about who they were going to be in the future. She also recognized that in order to make assumptions about a person without knowing them, it was necessary to use stereotypes (Lippmann, 1922/2017), and displayed her attitude towards this by stating that this was "wrong." She was therefore displaying both awareness of stereotyping as a process in relation to making assumptions about people, and a willingness to challenge this process, both of which were argued to be necessary in order to inhibit automatically activated stereotypes (Devine, 1989). Interestingly, the one group that moved all the way towards challenging the use of stereotypes in general in the post-interviews was the only group to acknowledge stereotypes in general in the pre-interviews. This could suggest that this group, through the co-construction of awareness in the pre-interviews, was at a different starting point at the beginning of the intervention than the other groups, which might have allowed them to advance further towards challenging during the period of the intervention than their peers.

Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to investigate if introducing CVL practices as an approach to teaching about cultures in the EFL classroom could have an effect on (1) the pupils' visual stereotypes, (2) the pupils' awareness of these, and (3) their willingness to challenge them. The results indicate that although the pupils engaged in the process of stereotyping both before and after the intervention, they were less inclined to make explicit displays of stereotyping in relation to ethnicity/religion afterwards. Simultaneously, the pupils who did stereotype explicitly after the intervention mainly did so with less personal involvement, distancing themselves from the stereotype by invoking other voices and were generally less inclined to elaborate on the stereotype. It was suggested that through disrupting stereotypes as a commonplace way of viewing the world (Lewison et al., 2002), the pupils might have gained insights that allowed them to "interrogate taken-for-granted social beliefs" (Lau et al., 2017, p. 120). In some instances, this led the pupils to take informed action (Lewison et al., 2002) and choose not to stereotype, while in others, it appears to have at least raised some awareness that stereotyping is not "the thing to do."

Simultaneously, the results showed a substantial increase in stereotype awareness from the pre- to the post-interviews, which was further explored through the texts produced by the pupils during the intervention. Overall, a change in the internal framing can be noted in most of the groups (Marková et al., 2007), whereby acknowledging and challenging stereotypes and the process of stereotyping became a more significant part of the groups' discourses. The results therefore indicate that it is possible for the pupils to increase their awareness of, as well as their willingness to challenge, the process of stereotyping through engaging in CVL practices.

The findings also indicate that although many of the pupils displayed an increased awareness of stereotypes, they struggled to move towards actually challenging them. Additionally, the results suggest that the pupils' different starting points related to awareness of and willingness to challenge stereotypes before the intervention may have had an influence on the extent to which they moved towards focusing on the general, and towards challenging, indicating that this is a process that requires time. Furthermore, this process might not have a clear end-point, as people are likely to move back and forth depending on the context surrounding individual instances of stereotyping. Thus, a possible avenue for further research could be a longitudinal study aiming to explore whether the effects of a longer intervention would be greater.

This study has therefore provided empirical evidence regarding the potential benefits of combining the CVL approach and EFL instruction, a link that has hitherto not been explored empirically to the best of the researcher's knowledge. These findings indeed look promising for the EFL classroom if one of the aims is to encourage greater understanding, as well as increased respect and interaction, between people with different cultural backgrounds. This article has argued that stereotypes can be problematic in intercultural communication, since people's identity is plural rather than essential (Dervin, 2012), and stereotypes encourage essentialism. Some scholars have raised a concern that explicitly addressing stereotypes in education could reinforce existing stereotypes, or even introduce new ones, for example through the pupils filtering new information in a way that confirms previous beliefs and attitudes (Byram, 1994, p. 39). However, as stereotyping is a natural and automatic process, the alternative is to leave this process unexposed, risking a continuation of sub-conscious stereotyping. Instead, teachers could aim to mitigate these risks by using stereotypes that the pupils already hold, or are aware of, as a starting point, and to facilitate critical reflection of these. Through encouraging the pupils to critically reflect on the stereotypes they bring to and take from images, teachers can support the development of strategies that make the workings of images, and stereotypes, conscious (Newfield, 2011). In this way, CVL practices can provide the pupils with agency to choose whether to act on the automatic stereotypes present in commonplace ways of viewing the world, and in images.

Viewing CVL as an approach to teaching cultures, rather than an aim in itself, also allows for the integration of the approach into regular instruction, while still attending to the other learning aims set by the teacher and the school curriculum. In this way, CVL practices can be implemented throughout the years of education, rather than as a one-off intervention, allowing more time for reflection and maturation of the pupils' thinking in relation to stereotypes. Although the current article has focused on the implementation of CVL practices in the EFL classroom, it is the researcher's belief that it would be beneficial to introduce such practices in other subjects, such as history and/or social science, as the issue of visual stereotypes is relevant beyond the EFL context. These subjects also have the advantage of being mostly taught in the pupils' first language, which might be particularly beneficial for encouraging engagement in critical reflections with young learners.

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Appendix 1 – Overview of tasks in the intervention

Topic	Task	Description	Time (min.)	Learning aims
Stereotypes Indigenous people Multiculturalism	Blindfold task. <i>Inspired by Vasquez, Tate, and Harste (2013)</i>	The pupils were asked to guess what a photograph depicting Native Americans might look like and reflected on the source of these assumptions in a class discussion.	10	Recognize the role of images in society Be aware of their own visual stereotypes and how these work
	Are images universally understood?	The pupils explore different ways of understanding the same images from different positions using an ambiguous cartoon taken from an advertisement for painkillers as well as an image containing items with strong cultural associations in Norway.	10	Be able to interrogate multiple perspectives
	AIEVM. <i>Adapted version from Barrett, Byram, Ipgrave, and Seurrat (2013)</i>	The pupils analyse an image depicting indigenous people, using questions from the AIEVM as a guide.	30	Be aware of their own visual stereotypes and how these work Recognize how the choices made by image makers and users positions the viewer to respond in particular ways
	Taking pictures of the school. <i>From Janks et al. (2014, p. 85)</i>	The pupils read and discuss the poem "The blind men and the elephant." They then take pictures of the school individually, and compare the images and the impression they give of the school in group discussions.	30	Recognize that all texts are partial re-presentations of the world
Visual stereotypes, redesign of photomontage <i>Montage taken from Bromseth and Wigdahl (2007)</i>	Following a lecture on visual stereotypes, the pupils redesign a montage from a Norwegian EFL textbook depicting indigenous people in pairs.	80	Be able to see how texts can be re-designed in order to give a more just representation of the world Be aware of their own visual stereotypes and how these work	

Politics Multiculturalism	American Born Chinese (Yang, 2006) <i>Questions adapted from Schieble (2014) and Davis (2013)</i>	The pupils read chapter 2 and 3 of the novel and answer questions related to stereotypes, positioning and power relationships.	80	Be able to recognize how the different elements of a multimodal text work together to create meaning
	Visual grammar and positioning. <i>Based on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and Janks et al. (2014)</i>	The pupils were introduced to key concepts from Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design (angle, frame, focus, colour etc.). They then analysed images of their choice using these tools.	60	Maintain a metalanguage and analytical tools to interrogate images Be able to recognize how the choices made by image makers and users positions the viewer to respond in particular ways
	Test (optional task on montage)	As an optional task on a test, the pupils wrote an essay discussing the montage depicting indigenous people used in previous task with the following prompt: Focusing on both the text and the images, write an analysis of the possible messages communicated about indigenous people through this montage. Discuss the potential implications of these messages, and how they relate to the situation of indigenous peoples today.	80	Be able to see how texts can be re-designed in order to give a more just representation of the world Recognize the role of images in society
Race Class	White privilege	The pupils discussed their own experiences of white privilege. They then analysed a poster that represents "white" people as "normal" from different perspectives.	30	Be able to interrogate multiple perspectives Be able to recognize how the different elements of a multimodal text work together to create meaning
	Political cartoons	The pupils analysed political cartoons addressing race issues in America	25	Maintain analytical tools to interrogate images Be able to recognize how the different elements of a multimodal text work together to create meaning Be able to recognize how the choices made by image makers and users positions the viewer to respond in particular ways
	Analysis of advertisement <i>Annotation of visuals, idea taken</i>	The teacher modelled a critical reading of two advertisements.	80	Be able to recognize how the choices made by image makers and users positions the viewer to

<i>from Arizpe, Bagelman, Devlin, Farrell, and McAdam (2014)</i>	The pupils then discussed an advertisement based on a list of questions, focusing on representations of race, power relationships and socio-political consequences.	respond in particular ways Recognize the role of images in society Maintain a metalanguage and analytical tools to interrogate images
<i>List of question based on Stevens and Bean (2007)</i>	Following this, the pupils redesigned the advertisement individually.	

Appendix 2 – Interview guide

Task 1, pre-interview

The pupils are shown the six photographs depicting teenagers with different gender and ethnicities.

1. Give a brief description of each person.
 - a. What are they like?
 - b. What type of job are they likely to have when they are adults?

They are then provided eight job titles printed on cards (builder, farmer, doctor, nurse, teacher, scientist, computers, cleaner) and are asked to work together to assign a job title to each photograph, while also discussing the reasoning behind their choices.

2. Who will have which job and why?

Task 1, post-interview

The pupils are shown the same six photographs as in the pre-interviews. They are then provided the same eight job titles, as well as eight hobbies (gaming, reading, basketball, comics, chess, fishing, singing, computer programming) and are asked to work together to assign one job title and one hobby to each photograph, while also discussing the reasoning behind their choices.

1. Who will have which job and why?
2. Who has which hobby and why?

Appendix 3 - Transcription codes

Adapted from Halkier (2010, p. 71):

[]:	overlaps in speech
():	incomprehensible speech
[laughter]:	other oral expressions
[pointing]:	non-verbal expressions
...:	pauses less than 3 seconds, trailed off speech
[silence]:	pauses more than 3 seconds

Appendix 4 – Pupil text tasks

American Born Chinese

The pupils read Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006) and answered questions provided by the teacher, as well as a number of CVL questions added by the researcher (adapted from Davis, 2013 and Schieble, 2014). These were:

- On page 30-31 and then again on page 36, Jin Wang and Wei-Chen are introduced by teachers to their classmates. Discuss how the images and text work together to communicate the actions and reactions of the students and teachers. Which stereotypes of Chinese and American people can you identify?
- How are the other boys at Jin's school depicted on pages 32-33? What does this suggest about power relationships?
- Compare and contrast the opening images and words for each of the stories (page 23 and 43). How do the words and the images help distinguish the stories and set their respective tones?
- Compare the drawing styles used for Chin-Kee in comparison to the other characters in the story. What is the effect of this?

Optional task on exam – Montage

The pupils were shown a montage depicting indigenous people taken from an EFL textbook used in lower secondary school in Norway (Bromseth & Wigdahl, 2007, pp. 28-29). Prior to the exam, the pupils had discussed this montage in a full-class discussion and had produced re-designs of the montage in pairs. On the exam, the pupils were asked to write a 5-paragraph essay about one of five tasks, of which the following was related to the montage:

Focusing on both the text and the images, write an analysis of the possible messages communicated about indigenous people through this montage. Discuss the potential implications of these messages, and how they relate to the situation of indigenous peoples today.

Race in Advertisements

Prior to this task, the pupils participated in group discussions about an advertisement from Intel. Following this, the pupils were asked to redesign the advertisement individually:

Think about potential problems of the advertisement. How could it be re-designed? Sketch a suggestion below. Write annotations if necessary to make your points clearer.

They were also asked to give an explanation behind their choices:

Write about your re-designed advertisement. Explain the changes you made, as well as the reasons why you made these changes. In what ways do you think your re-designed advertisement is better than the original one?