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Eva Matscheko

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Dedication

It's Okay to Be Grateful!

My heartfelt thanks go to my family and friends, who have been a solid source of support throughout the whole studies and particularly the past several months!

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Who am I? Who are the others?	3
2.1. Identity	4
2.2. Alterity	10
2.3. Identity and Alterity – Key Questions in Cultural Studies	14
3. Picturebooks	17
3.1. Defining Picturebooks, a Subgenre of Children’s Literature.....	19
3.2. The Verbal and the Visual – Picturebooks as a Coherent Whole	22
3.3. Identity and Alterity in Picturebooks	31
4. Not Just For Little Kids – Picturebooks with Young Adults.....	35
4.1. Picturebooks in the (Austrian) EFL Classroom	37
4.1.1. Intercultural Learning in the Austrian Curriculum.....	40
5. A Close Reading of a Sample Selection	46
5.1. Elmer	47
5.2. Something Else.....	57
5.3. It’s Okay to Be Different	64
5.4. Similarities and Differences in the Sample Selection	70
6. Putting Theory into Practice: Teaching Picturebooks in the EFL Classroom	74
6.1. General Rationale	79
6.2. Lesson Plan: It’s Okay to Be Different	81
6.2.1. Teaching Practice: Insights and Reflective Discussion.....	89
7. Conclusion	92
8. Bibliography	96
8.1. Primary Sources	96
8.2. Secondary Sources	96
Abstract.....	101
Zusammenfassung.....	102
Appendix.....	103

List of Abbreviations

AHS	Allgemein bildende Höhere Schule
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESC	Eurovision Song Contest
GERS	Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen
ICL	Intercultural Learning
IOTBD	It's Okay to Be Different ¹
ÖSZ	Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum
PPP	PowerPoint Presentation
TBLT	Task Based Language Teaching

¹ This exclusively refers to Todd Parr's book title.

List of Figures and Tables

Fig. 1: Identity as a Mediator 6

Fig. 2: Elmer Cover 47

Fig. 3: Something Else Cover..... 57

Fig. 4: It's Okay to Be Different Cover 64

Fig. 5: Who is Who - ESC Special..... 89

Fig. 6: Caption It! Students' Suggestions..... 89

Fig. 7: Personal Class Patchwork..... 90

Table 1: Lesson Plan Overview 83

1. Introduction

It's Okay to Be Different!

Given the semantic parallels between Todd Parr's picturebook and this thesis, I decided on the same title to highlight the thematic focus of alterity. Alterity in general refers to the notion of otherness, meaning the other of something or someone in direct relation. Potential differences between two objects of comparison may be rooted in physical distinctions, emotions or specific customs, to only mention a few, which can lead to a stigmatization of someone or something as the other. This paper assumes picturebooks to be a suitable medium to raise awareness of the negative consequences of othering and thus sets out to identify how alterity is covered in this literary genre. Also, the suitability of picturebooks that deal with alterity in the Austrian English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is questioned. Accordingly, a combination of a theoretical, analytical and practical scrutiny provides the reader with a presentation of the issue from diverse angles.

For the development of a basic understanding of otherness, the guiding questions of *Who am I?* and *Who are the others?* build the foundation for the literature review. This study provides an opportunity to advance the reader's knowledge of two conjoined and multilayered concepts, namely identity and alterity, that complement each other and, taken together, allow for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the self and the other. Identity and alterity form key elements among cultural studies, a multifaceted field of study that ideally suits the purpose of this research. The need to address intercultural issues in the (language) classroom is a direct result of a constant rise in cross-cultural encounters. Thereby, picturebooks lend themselves to enhance the focus of the self with perceptions of the other.

Having established a theoretical basis for the main concepts in question, the paper will outline the genre conventions of picturebooks. The possibly artful interplay between the verbal and the visual grants picturebooks uniqueness, which requires an appreciation of the book as a coherent whole, including an

acknowledgement of the endpapers and the cover. The idea that picturebooks are specifically targeted at children has long been considered a fact, but has currently become more frequently questioned. A broadening of the audience of picturebooks beyond children ideally suits this research, which acknowledges the use of picturebooks in a secondary school setting. In the pages that follow, it will be argued that the subgenre of children's literature is an adequate medium for the teaching of social issues and values, particularly in a school context. In view of increasing international relations, the promotion of an open-minded attitude towards anything foreign is also vital for the classroom in order to diminish othering. As intercultural learning has already reached school curricula, clear regulations urge teachers to address intercultural issues. Accordingly, this paper reviews in how far dealing with otherness is part of ICL and how it is addressed in the Austrian curricula for general education objectives and foreign languages.

Answering the question of how alterity is addressed in picturebooks will be one of the main focuses of this study. It is assumed that in the majority of picturebooks that deal with identity or alterity, the protagonist struggles with his or her or its own identity as opposed to a hegemonic other or a group of others that perform othering. An initial close reading of the sample selection including *Elmer* (McKee 1989), *Something Else* (Cave 1994) and *It's Okay to Be Different* (Parr 2001) will be followed by a direct comparison of the three primary examples regarding the similarities and differences in their depiction of othering.

The eventual design and actual implementation of a lesson plan in a school adds a subject-didactic emphasis to this study and examines to what extent picturebooks can aid in the teaching of alterity and ICL in the Austrian AHS EFL classroom with young adults.

2. Who am I? Who are the others?

Providing an answer to the questions in the chapter heading seems a feasible task at first glance. Especially with regard to the first one, it is easy to recognize a connection to identity. Richard Jenkins' contribution to identity studies *Social Identity* argues in a similar way by outlining that "[m]any of us, much of the time, are able to take identity for granted. We seem to know who we are, we have a good enough working sense of who the others in our lives are, and they appear to relate to us in the same way" (1). Without further scrutinizing, readers might interpret identity to be a relatively straightforward concept. The sociologist, however, critically remarks in immediate sequence that identity should not be taken for granted, as it deserves time for reflection (5). Following his suggestion, this chapter sets out to define identity and profoundly examine its multiple layers. After an initial discussion of the notions of the self, the related counterpart, the other, will be given meticulous attention with the aid of the second leading question. As will be demonstrated, the negotiation of alterity and thus, the existence of an other, might imply far reaching consequences. Interestingly, experts in this field of study do not agree in terms of their orthography of the word other². I deliberately decided to omit the capital letter or any emphasis through quotation marks to guarantee a more neutral discussion of such a delicate term, given that a valuefree approach enhances the quality of the discussion.

Identity and alterity have long been of great interest in a wide range of fields and have always attracted scholars from diverse disciplines, including sociology, philosophy and psychology, among others. Numerous publications prove that a lot of researchers in the field of cultural studies have attended to this matter (Simon 3). While it is important to consider a variety of views to offer a comprehensive analysis, this paper mainly specializes in a cultural studies approach. It is a broad and multilayered field that is also crucial for the school context and especially the language classroom. Apart from the attempt of a

² Possible spellings: the other (Parfitt 675), the Other (Zahavi 160), the *other* (Nait Brahim 7).

closer definition, an insight into the teaching methodological perspective of cultural studies will be provided.

To give an overview of what to expect, both identity and alterity are categories used to describe people as well as concepts to better understand their relationship, or even to classify them. Thereby, the position from which people are perceived is of vital importance. Before the focus is laid on a more detailed presentation of identity and alterity and their relevance for cultural studies, an individual investigation of both concepts will proceed.

As it is impossible to cover these identity and alterity in their entirety, I deliberately chose to limit the literature review to the definition and selected key aspects that I consider most relevant for this thesis. The key questions *Who am I?* and *Who are the others?* fulfill the purpose of a common thread, running not only through this section, but also through the whole paper. They ideally suit the examination of the main research questions and provide a stable foundation for the theoretical investigation and the following in-depth analysis of the primary sources, namely, the selected picturebooks.

2.1. Identity

To begin with, a thorough investigation of identity, “a multifaceted phenomenon” (Simon 3), is essential. Since the last decade of the 20th century, a considerable amount of literature has been published on identity (Barker 11). These studies reveal similar, if not even the same attempts to defining this concept, despite their different scholarly foci. Joep Leerssen, a researcher in the field of comparative literature, has contributed highly to identity studies and claims that identity “fundamentally denotes a relationship expressing the sameness of a thing with itself” (335). Confirming Leerssen’s perspective with an additional, commonly agreed upon interpretation in cultural studies, Elaine Baldwin, Brian Longhurst, Scott McCracken, Miles Ogborn and Greg Smith straightforwardly outline that “[i]dentity is about how we define who we are” (224). Moreover, it is not only at the heart of identity studies to enquire “how [...] we see ourselves”

but also “how [...] others see us” (Barker 165). Thus, the focus clearly lies on the understanding of the self. Jenkins rightfully asserts that “identity matters” (1). Identity matters in every condition of life as it forms a constant companion and greatly impacts a person’s behavior. In order to grasp the extent of what identity entails, the establishment of a basic understanding of oneself as well as the other is an absolute precondition. Perceiving and positioning oneself in relation to someone or something else always involves a reflective evaluation regarding similarities or differences (Jenkins 5; 17). This is also partly reflected in the origin of the term identity itself, as its etymology has its roots in the Latin expression “*idem*”, meaning “the same” (Leerssen 335, original emphasis).

Identity is in constant change or development and is therefore a non-stable concept, in the sense that the individual undergoes adaption processes. In *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, Chris Barker distinguishes identity from some innate characteristics or attributes by stressing that it is a reflection process or more precisely “a mode of thinking about ourselves” (167). In consequence, it is agreed upon by scholars that identity is nothing fixed and always subject to continuous change (Baldwin et al. 224; Barker 167; Leerssen 338). Hence, one can perceive a direct relation to the verb *to identify*, clearly denoting the activity that is recognized in the negotiation of identity: “it isn’t ‘just there’, it’s not a ‘thing’, it must *always* be established” (Jenkins 17, original emphasis).

As has become obvious already, the angle from which identity is analyzed always requires careful consideration. Identity and consequently, our relationship to others can broadly be split into two different categories: self-identity and social identity. The former refers to our personal perception and behavior, whereas the latter signifies the conception from an external position (Barker 165). More precisely, a person’s identity is always fragmented in the sense that the self is dependent on and influenced by a person’s position and where he or she positions himself or herself among society. For example, a woman can be a mother, an employee and a person’s best friend at the same time. Depending on the context, her behavior continuously varies and is

influenced by how she sees herself among a particular group as well as how the others perceive her.

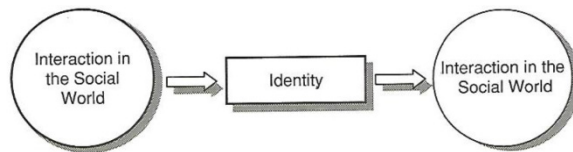


Fig. 1: Identity as a Mediator

Illustration taken from Simon p.2.

Bernd Simon introduces an interesting psychological approach with regard to the relation of ourselves and the others in identity negotiation. Figure number one shows that he perceives “[i]dentity as

a social psychological mediator between input from and output in the social world” (2). In other words, identity serves as a mediator between a person’s inner self and the outside world. The outside greatly influences an individual’s identity, is then negotiated and established within the person, before it is communicated openly to others.

Similar to identity being a relationally and socially structured concept, it is also culturally constructed, owing to the fact that the cultural surrounding, in which a person grows up, vastly affects his or her identity. According to Michael Ryan, a scholar in the field of cultural studies, being raised in a certain culture goes hand in hand with the internalization of “ways of understanding and methods of reasoning [used] to read the cultural world around” (83). Moreover, despite the opportunity to gain control over certain aspects of one’s own identity, preexisting parameters pave the way for identity formation. To support the claims provided, Baldwin et al. assert that “[w]e perform [...] according to a script already written as the cultural conventions of our society. In this view, identities are cultural constructions rather than pre-set” (225). What stems from this is the visualization of the markers of identity related to a notion suggested by the French psychologist Piaget, who introduced the “concept of a *moi-peau*”. He interprets identity as “a ‘skin’, which not only contains and closes off the individual’s body, but also forms a sensory interface between Self and Outside” (Leerssen 339, original emphasis).

In accordance with the interpretation of identity as a skin, it is necessary to feel comfortable in one’s own skin, as identity significantly shapes people’s actions

and behavior. Simon elaborates on the impact of identity on each individual, and brings up the serious consequences that an identity crisis could have on a person. By warning about these consequences, he intends to attract attention to the other side of the coin, and adds that “identity is obviously [also] involved when a majority group stigmatizes, mistreats or even annihilates a minority group” (Simon 1). Emphasizing and analyzing a person’s similarities and differences to other members of a group generally aids in establishing and understanding one’s own identity. When the concept of identity is used to establish power relations, the prioritizing of one’s own self in relation to another results in the discrimination of the other and therefore needs to be questioned. The exclusive emphasis of a person’s differences accounts for and reveals an alternative approach towards identity, namely alterity, which will be discussed separately in the subsequent section.

This short glimpse into the possibility of a dominance of one identity over the other ties in nicely with the notion of power, which, according to Baldwin et al., is used “to interpret the body and representation of people and places; and to make sense of our understandings of time and space” (94). Therefore, power plays a major role in identity creation, as is confirmed by Barker, who compares it to a common thread running through “every level of social relationships” (10). Due to its omnipresence, power constitutes a vast, highly multilayered concept within cultural studies. Thus, it needs to be approached with critical care and a clear focus. Concerning the impact of power relations on identity and therefore also alterity, one must thoroughly consider the question: Who is (presented as) superior and who is inferior?

Considering that literature on identity determines a clear correlation between the self and the other, “It is about defining ‘us’ by defining ‘them’” (Baldwin et al. 167). Hence, as already pointed out above, the negotiation of identity depends on those two entities, again hinting towards the necessity of discussing alterity further. Prior to the realization of someone else as the other, however, is the awareness of oneself. Leerssen supports this core element by remarking that “the differentiation between familiar and alien [...] is a fundamental act of intelligence at the very root of what identity means” (337). Consequently, the

ability to recognize a person's identity is contingent on categories of difference, class, race, gender or age, among other descriptors. This means that the negotiation of identity works with various forms of representation, which contribute to a sense of belonging for an individual or lead to the exclusion of others. In this process, so-called exclusion and inclusion markers serve the purpose of revealing affiliation or segregation (Barker 166). A mundane example, such as the formation of a sports team, serves as the ideal support for this claim: Despite the individuality of each member, the group shares an intersecting trait and consequently experiences a feeling of identification due to certain characteristics, rituals and forms of representation. Their belonging is experienced by them sharing the same trainer, rules or rituals. It can, additionally, be visually represented through the same jersey. In contrast to these markers of inclusion, a look back in history sadly provides numerous instances of exclusion often associated with marginalized groups. The exclusion of Jews in Nazi Germany marks one of the most negative outstanding examples. The Jewish badge was used to visualize their identity and clearly label them as outsiders, meant to be excluded from society. This illustrates that exclusion markers can carry the meaning of oppression if imposed by a hegemonic group.

In reference to any systems of representation and already having established that "the concept of identity serves to bridge social structure (society) and social person (self)" (Simon 25), it is essential not to ignore another feasible distinction in connection with those two components, namely individual identity and collective identity, also referred to as group identity. This means that apart from one's individual traits, the identification with people, who share the same markers of similarity or difference, creates collective identity. By metaphorically referring to the animal world, Leerssen ascribes a certain "unique individuality" to each identity by stating: "To identify a single ant within an anthill means to single it out, to see it separate from the amorphous group-as-a-whole" (337). He, thereby, denies the possibility of two completely alike identities and values individuality more greatly.

Theorists in this field of study have two further ways of analyzing identity, in particular as constructed or performed. Both approaches, however, do not always stand in opposition to each other, but rather frequently interrelate. Beginning with the notion of constructed identity, a person's identity is heavily contingent on social context and relations. In other words, society at large and especially a person's immediate surrounding greatly influence his or her identity by means of enculturation. Within this cultural frame, certain relationships allow identification, for instance the connection between a mother and her daughter. This means that culture has a major impact on a person and more specifically, people behave according to their cultural contingency (Ryan 83), which already points to the notion of performed identity. Baldwin et al. outline that "[i]dentity is understood to be performative, not based on any essential characteristics, but rather is a performance based on cultural expectations" (225). Performativity includes behaviors and actions, among others eating habits and fashion choices. These decisions do not necessarily have to be made consciously but a person has control over his or her performances to some extent. To exemplify, living on a vegan diet might derive from family tradition or be a deliberate choice by the individual. This shows that a person is at least partly in control of how he / she is perceived by others. Despite the possibility of analyzing this aspect of identity from these two angles, in some cases it is not feasible to clearly separate between identity as construction or performance, but rather emphasize their interrelatedness.

Many picturebooks represent a fine example of the interdependence of constructed and performed identity as in this genre the performances of characters are always constructed through the author and the illustrator. Regarding the central issue of alterity, characters are deliberately ascribed certain characteristics in order to highlight the differences to each other. While the ascription of markers of otherness points towards constructed identity, it is important to emphasize that the construction of identity often becomes visible to the reader through performance by the acting agents. In *Elmer*, for instance, the protagonist is constructed as different from the other elephants through his patchwork skin. For Elmer his identity as an elephant is dependent on the grey skin color of his peers. The deliberate change of his visual appearance by

rolling himself in grey berries thus aids in performing a different identity. As illustrated, the picturebook creators purposefully employ performances in their construction of characters in order to make their identity visible. This highlights that both approaches to identity valuably contribute to a picturebook analysis.

In summation, the investigation of identity studies has narrowed down a tremendously large field of research to designated key aspects. Thereby, a clear focus on the self has been revealed that is greatly influenced by the personal perception and that of the others along with the cultural surrounding a person is raised in. This means that identity is partly constructed and performed accordingly in diverse situations. This distinction is of major importance when dealing with the issue of identity in literature. Considering the perception of the audience, the reader must differentiate between the constructed characters by the author and how they perform in different situations, in diverse surroundings. As has been shown, exploiting imbalanced power relations to declare one's identity as inferior to another often results in the stigmatization of someone as other. In the following section, the centralization of differences will be newly seized on as the focus will be laid on alterity.

2.2. Alterity

Having established the close interrelationship between the self and the other, identity and alterity must be analyzed as two conjoined concepts. Scholars confidently stress their interdependence. Paul Voestermans, for instance, suggests a model for the assumption of a close interrelationship between identity and alterity by referring to them as "twin concepts" (221). In his view,

'[a]lterity' can broadly be defined as discourse on the otherness of people, particularly people outside one's domestic ken. 'Identity' is the affirmation of who we are by contrasting nearly every element of our way of life with that of others. (Voestermans 219)

Voestermans' definition confirms a shift in the focus from the self in identity studies to the other in the discussion of alterity.

The other is to be understood “as constitutive of a certain sort of subject” (Malone 51). Juxtaposing Kareen Malone’s view with Voestermans’ interpretation, their psychological approach towards alterity declares that the other can solely exist by recognizing characteristic differences of any sort to the self or the norm. The latter denotes a highly problematical expression, in the sense that there must be a universal or general understanding of the interpretations the term norm entails and therefore requires cautious use. Whoever has the ability or right to judge, is automatically placed in a more dominant position, which leads to an imbalance of power between who is judging and who is being judged. A high number of commonly perceived norms are established unconsciously, but are still rooted deeply in people’s minds. This refers to a basically agreed upon understanding, which outlines that norms “are statements that regulate behavior” (Horne 4). Returning to the initial discussion, it has become obvious that a deviation from such standardized actions leads to the process of othering, which means the emphasis of differences and thereby the stigmatization of a person as the other. The understanding of norms, what they represent and their originating process have been the subject of investigation in several scholarly areas, such as psychology and sociology, and are the result of a long historical process, as the perception of norms has altered over time and adjusted to prevalent values. At some point, a decision about what constitutes a prescriptive norm must be made. The acceptance of certain differences leads to the establishment of a newly defined identity with fixed norms and at the same time bans the rise of other differences (Dean 29). In other words, while some norms are continuously adapted to given conditions, such as fashion, other images persist for decades or even centuries. This often refers to categories of differences, most commonly gender, race or cultural identity.

One-sided contemplations tend to only reveal fragments of reality, which are often falsely considered to be the universal truth. When spread and repeatedly emphasized, those pieces of the puzzle transform into fixed mental concepts. Regardless of their either positive or negative depictions, taking such supposed truths for granted leads to one of the major dangers in identity formation: The acceptance of partly incorrect and mutually agreed on images regularly

determines the practice of otherness (Nait Brahim 7-9). Leerssen remarks on one essential part of the field of study in question by stressing that “[t]he [...] experience of alterity hence becomes the starting point of any preoccupation with the world’s diversity, and will lie at the root of any process of stereotyping or ‘othering’” (337). Voestermans conforms to this belief by claiming that the study of alterity “takes its point of departure in finished mental products” (220). This, in turn, suggests that people must be made aware of the consequences of othering (Corbey and Leerssen viii). It is moreover necessary to reflect critically on one’s own personal behavior regarding othering and the possible negative implications it can lead to. Stigmatizing something or someone as the other might easily lead to an imbalance in power relations and place the performer of othering into a more dominant position.

An examination of the past unfortunately proves that “[c]ertain identities have been privileged over others” (Baldwin et al. 224). Thus, the establishment of such imbalanced power relations is a historical fact applying to the dominance of one group or race over the other or the inequality of sexes. In the context of discussing alterity, othering and hegemonic relations, it is not farfetched to, once again, refer to one of the most infamous crimes against humanity. This year’s 70th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust should remind the world of the cruelty the Jews experienced. Great improvements in ongoing educational work have already been accomplished in attempts to prevent any comparable tragedies from happening again. Nonetheless, it is of tremendous importance to raise people’s awareness of the unfortunate reality that something similar could still happen today. This, in turn, means that alterity for a long time has been, still is and probably will always be a prominent issue among societies. Trevor Parfitt advocates for the visualization of the negative implications of alterity. By referring to the exact same historical crime, he highlights the necessity of “guard[ing] against such abuses of power by advocating recognition of others in their otherness and by questioning any authority that seeks to demonise or exclude others, whether on racial, national, religious, gender or other grounds” (Parfitt 683-684). The author not only touches upon numerous categories that potentially cause othering, but also cautions against their abuse in order not to

have anyone labeled as different, in an exclusionary sense. In contrast, he positively evaluates the differences and appreciates their existence.

As shown, othering is initiated as soon as emphasis is put on any kind of differences contrasted to the self or the so-called norm. In direct relation to that, Voestermans hints towards one of the key problems in this area, by enquiring, whether “the image of the Other can exist outside the social realities of the self” (221). To be able to label someone or something as the other, “self-identity [needs to grow] separately and prior to the awareness of alterity” (Nait Brahim 8). The following lines summarize this exceedingly sophisticated phenomenon that scholars from various research areas have already philosophized about at greater length.

When I realize that I can be given for the Other in the same way as the Other is given for me, that is, when I realize that I myself am an Other to the Other, my self-apprehension will be transformed correspondingly. (Zahavi 160)

To put Dan Zahavi’s philosophical view more simply, he describes the process of how an individual can come to the realization that the other is not exclusively outside us. There is always the possibility of interchanging places, which triggers different perceptions and accordingly can transform the self to the other.

Reflecting on the notion of alterity, so far, the other is predominantly negatively connotated. Positive associations with the other, however, must not be left aside. These might refer to something exotic, erotic or enticing about another person. It is often the unknown that attracts and the difference to the self which might hold special appeal for someone. Considering the need for a twofold view on the other, there is an instant call for the promotion of an open-minded attitude. One possible way is to actively experience and be confronted with foreign customs, seeking for the reduction or even eradication of such fixed mental images previously mentioned. Although direct confrontation might help, in most cases a sole encounter is insufficient. It is the responsibility of educational institutions, such as schools, to provide additional information and raise awareness of the vast consequences othering might entail, by performing preventive action and thereby limiting “negative attitudes and behaviours such

as racism and discrimination“ (Nait Brahim 7). The accountability that is ascribed to schools in this matter expects great responsibility of the teachers. Addressing such delicate issues in class requires adequate background knowledge and suitable methods to convey the impacts of alterity.

To sum up, I want to revisit the major insights gained on alterity. Alterity refers to the notion of the other, whereby othering is performed through the centralization of differences. Ana Gonçalves Matos asserts that “the *other* is perceived as different when in contrast with an *I*” (77, original emphasis). This signals that the other exists when in comparison to the self, once more underlining the close interrelationship of identity and alterity. Any so-called norm deviances likewise regularly trigger stigmatization processes. In this context, the term norm, however, must be questioned carefully. Moreover, the perception of the other is always dependent on the perspective from which it is determined. Anyone can be an other in the eyes of an other. As alterity enables the categorization of people, the implication of negative consequences of othering is not far-fetched. This makes it possible to numerate several severe instances of othering during the past, usually caused through disproportional power relations. Great responsibility lies on schools and teachers to find a way to familiarize them with possible consequences of othering and raise their awareness of the positive connotations that also lie in the other.

2.3. Identity and Alterity – Key Questions in Cultural Studies

Curiosity in cultural studies initially arose beginning around the year 1850; over time the field has undergone great developments up until now (Teske 23). Barker demonstrates the difficulty of adequately classifying this domain.

It remains difficult to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified, academic discipline with clear-cut substantive topics, concepts and methods which differentiate it from other disciplines. Cultural studies is, and always has been, a multi-or post-disciplinary field of inquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and the other ‘subjects’. (5)

His definition of the investigated discipline certainly reveals the complexity of cultural studies and emphasizes its blurred boundaries to related areas. A probable factor aggravating the exact determination of cultural studies could be the word culture in itself. Carrying a plethora of potential meanings, the term culture goes far beyond a simplified, however frequently encountered connotation of a nation's customs. Drawing on this, Joanna Zylińska rightfully outlines the peculiarities that distinguish cultural studies from other disciplines by claiming that "culture can only be *used*; it can be performed, produced and consumed but not studied in the conventional sense, because its researcher is unable to separate herself from her object of study" (1, original emphasis). Given the complexity of the conception of culture, a similar conclusion can be drawn for the related term interculture, which, too, forms a central part among diverse disciplines evermore. In relation to that, the adjective intercultural is more commonly established and has, according to Susanne Weber, substituted its predecessor international, even causing a broader range of possible interpretations (17). She perceives phenomena such as "globalization, internationalization, and new information and communication technologies" (Weber 19) as major driving forces behind societal changes, urging to merge cultures and provide people with a general understanding of foreign nations.

Regardless of a disagreement in terms of a consistent definition, there is no doubt that for a considerable amount of time now, "[c]ultural studies has achieved a central position in academia" (Teske 23), and theorists in this domain seek to cover a large number of diverse aspects. To briefly summarize, Barker explains that "cultural studies explores how we come to be the kinds of people we are, how we are produced as subjects, and how we identify with (or emotionally invest in) descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, young or old" (11). On an academic level, cultural studies is concerned with the social contexts and relations of individuals (Edgar and Sedgwick 183). As stated, people act according to their cultural contingency and their behavior is thus of interest to cultural studies. This explains the subordination of identity and consequently also alterity to this field of study. Furthermore, Stuart Hall promotes cultural studies to be a universal concept in the sense that it does not simply attract attention among intellectuals in scholarly activities and higher

education, but rather is a phenomenon commonly found and of relevance to a vast audience, primarily independent of their educational attainment (11). This omnipresence also endorses the validity of teaching aspects of cultural studies in schools.

The growing ubiquity of cultural exchange along with ongoing developments in school curricula more commonly focus on the introduction of the cultural aspect in education, specifically in secondary schools. It is primarily the foreign language classroom that provides ample opportunities to approach interculturality and enables students to understand the social context of the self in relation to that of others. As “Cultural Studies especially focus on awareness and reflexivity, and thus work with certain strategies, which correspond with schoolroom needs [...]”, Doris Teske supports to teach learners a reflective approach towards the self and the other (27). This means that identity and alterity are suitable issues to be addressed in the classroom. Their introduction is often coupled with the aim of encouraging an open-minded attitude, appreciating the foreign and accepting differences (Teske 23-24). In this respect, Jürgen Bolten rightfully mentions teachers as major stakeholders, who need to impart the essence and key values of intercultural learning (ICL) (108). ICL is a pedagogical topic and defined as “[t]he interaction with the other culture and codes of behaviour deviating from the known” (Teske 27). This means that the transmission and negotiation of foreign values is necessary to better comprehend the interconnection between cultures. Although ICL has already become a common topic in schools, there is no consistent agreement in terms of terminology. A more thorough investigation on this matter will be provided in section 4.1.1. titled *Intercultural Learning in the Austrian Curriculum*, which emphasizes the didactic perspective of ICL.

Teske, who devotes her research to the didactical component and teaching methodology of cultural studies, introduces hermeneutics as a useful approach to teach the essence of identity and alterity (27). Accordingly, dealing with literature provides the opportunity to see the self in relation to the other and vice versa, presuming the availability of appropriate texts. Notably, “[w]hat people read as children greatly influences them and helps to form the adults they

become” (Holt 337). As literature can aid in the acquisition of basic social competences already in the early days, the added value of children’s literature in this context stands beyond doubt. Besides, addressing identity and alterity with the help of children’s literature, picturebooks in particular, enables the teacher to use “authentic material” (Teske 23). As will be shown later in greater detail, this genre is definitely effective for the transmission of the accompanying core aspects. This happens due to a combination of the composition of picturebooks and the way the authors create a storyline with the acting agents. The chosen primary examples for this thesis commonly adopt a sensitive and reader-friendly approach towards delicate issues.

Although it is difficult to clearly specify cultural studies, its multifacetedness appeals to a wide audience, including scholars from diverse research areas, teachers as well as laypeople. Cultural studies addresses issues that are in need of a critical approach, such as identity and alterity. The growing need for intercultural exchange urges teachers to take the world into the (language) classroom and provide enough possibilities to include intercultural issues. A change in perspective might enrich the focus of the self with that of an other, adding a different view on identity negotiation. Thereby, picturebooks in their entire intricacy offer sophisticated and appropriate reading material for all ages, which calls for a profound investigation of this literary genre dealt with in the subsequent section.

3. Picturebooks

The following chapter focuses on the genre of picturebooks, analyzing the interplay of diverse recurring features that together make it possible to define the picturebook as a specialist genre of its own. Still, certain overlaps with the major genre of children’s literature will be presented in order to justify its subordination to the broader genre. The major issue of how the pictures and the words either coincide or complement each other has been unceasingly prominent in the field of picturebook research. Distinct attention will, therefore,

be dedicated to the depiction of the current state of research, underlined by referring to some fairly recently published primary examples. In a final step, the guiding questions of Who am I? and Who are the others? are newly elaborated upon. With respect to the ensuing practical didactic approach, the major concepts of identity and alterity will be narrowed down to their depiction in picturebooks.

To begin with, literature on picturebooks diverges in possible spellings. While some scholars prefer a separation into two words, others advocate one word. Lawrence Sipe, a key theorist in picturebook research, belongs to the latter group. He purposefully opts for “one word rather than two, for it is the combination of art and language that together create the aesthetic object” (Sipe, “The Art of the Picturebook.” 238). In accordance with his point of view, I also decided to use the one-word spelling for my thesis.

With every new contribution to the literary picturebook market, each example is exposed to evaluation. Experts as well as typical readers continuously form an opinion about existing publications and assess their didactic potential (Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult* 134). However, who is then to decide whether a picturebook bears considerable potential for the private use or the classroom needs? Frequently, librarians act decisively in the selection process of suitable picturebooks and need to ensure accountability for their decisions made (Brown 84-85). In the case of sensitive topics, such as alterity, similar obligation is imposed on those, who decide on approaching the subject matter through the medium of picturebooks (Hillmann 101). Frequently teachers must determine which books are appropriate for their students to read before bringing them to the classroom. They need to be able to provide reasons that explain their choice. After all, “[i]t is extremely difficult to be objective about a picture book because each of us brings something different to what he sees. What is beautiful to one of us might be merely dull to another-or worse” (Brown 88). The angle from which we interpret the picturebook is greatly shaped by the individual’s position. This refers to both the subjective and emotional component as well as the cultural conditions that significantly influence a person’s background knowledge and the way a picturebook is valued.

Picturebooks might be deemed unworthy of academic concern, but contrary to popular belief, they require the same high standards for literary criticism as other book genres. In other words, a sophisticated and nuanced discussion is necessary. To be able to grasp and appreciate a picturebook as a whole, it must be thoroughly examined in all its intricacy. This, in turn, requires active engagement with all its literary elements, most predominantly the text and the pictures. Before both will receive due dedication at a later stage in the paper, the subsequent section deals with defining picturebooks.

3.1. Defining Picturebooks, a Subgenre of Children's Literature

Deriving from countries in the North West of Europe, the genre of children's literature arose beginning approximately in the middle of the eighteenth century. Its longevity in the literary canon calls for a scrutiny of the peculiarities literature for children offers. According to Emer O'Sullivan, children's literature is classified through its "formative function", denoting and even verbalizing "a society's cultural identity" ("Children's Literature." 290). As literature plays a decisive factor in the fostering of societal values, the importance of a didactic and moral approach in children's books stands beyond doubt. Despite an agreement on the purpose of books for the youngest, publications lack in a comprehensive definition of that particular genre. Perry Nodelman, one of the most prominent scholars in the area of children's literature, even suggests an almost impossibility to detect a commonly agreed upon definition (*The Hidden Adult* 139). Hans-Heino Ewers assumes that "es eine allumfassende, in jeder Hinsicht gültige Definition [...] nicht geben kann und dass es auch gar nicht sinnvoll ist, danach zu suchen" (13).

Nevertheless, Ewers developed different theories about the characteristics of children's literature. To begin with, the primary audience is, as the name entails, children. The concept of children, however, lacks specificity, and includes the broad age range of two to eighteen, thus requiring further subdivision (Ewers 24). This stands in direct relation to the second essential feature, namely the

adaption of children's literature to the specific readership. It is obvious that two-year-old toddlers need to be exposed to different kinds of literature than teenagers, who have already undergone their coming-of-age phase. Different language levels and children's cognitive abilities must also be carefully considered, along with the choice of and variation in age-dependent topics in order to achieve successful entertainment and education for young readers. Thereby, it is important to distinguish literature for children as a fully-fledged genre in the literary canon. The storyline, for instance, does not suffer from the potentially simplified presentation of diverse issues (Ewers 144-145). According to Nodelman, some scholars do not see a great gap between literature for adults and literature for children, but rather consider an adaption of the latter to the former, in terms of linguistic and stylistic features (*The Hidden Adult* 142). Especially the aforementioned educational focus is another trait by which one can identify children's literature. It should serve the purpose of teaching the underage readership important values of life and broaden their horizon (Ewers 141), which is proof of their suitability in a school context. Considering this, picturebooks definitely form a distinct genre in children's literature (Nodelman "Words Claimed." 12).

In brief, they can be characterized through their brevity in length, their stylistic features, as well as their composition and design that distinguish them from any other literary genre. Picturebooks are usually relatively short and an average number of 32 pages renders a mostly fictional story that concerns issues interesting and relevant to children (Hillmann 94). The restricted amount of pages in a picturebook does not limit its complexity and impact on the audience, as picturebook authors can create an artistic work with their sophisticated use of the picturebook's common stylistic features. According to Judith Hillmann, "[s]tyle refers to the combination of [...] the total effect of color, line, media, and every choice an artist makes as she or he creates the final book" (Hillmann 84, original emphasis). This means that the final version includes multiple layers that contribute to the success of each book. Given the fact that so many factors add to the composition of a picturebook, its overall design denotes another distinctive characteristic feature. Most obviously, the combination of the verbal and the visual produce a unique effect on the reader, which will be dealt with

separately in more detail in the following section. Although the choice of layout and colors for the cover of a book generally plays an important role, I assert that for picturebooks, they carry even more weight, including an appreciation of the endpapers.

In order to understand the full potential picturebooks offer, the definition must include more features. Picturebooks require the depiction of some sort of storyline that is presented to the reader. This does not necessarily have to be a story in the conventional sense, however, some sort of suspense is required, as “[p]icture books without tension or conflict are less successful” (Lukens 51). The audience demands at least some elements of a storyline in order to uphold the desire to continue reading. The application of diverse literary techniques within the story, including characterization, perspective or style, makes the picturebook more effective as they stimulate the reader’s imagination and prevent from wanting to stop (Nikolajeva and Scott 24-26).

The plot or action is best underlined with the introduction of a theme that frequently governs the story (Hillmann 100). Again, there is no need for a long and complicated story to be able to transfer meaning or identify a theme running through like a common thread. As will be dealt with in more detail throughout the course of this thesis, picturebooks serve as the ideal medium for the conveyance of diverse issues, especially social, pedagogical or psychological ones, even if they arouse controversy among the readership.

Another obligatory literary element to understand the story refers to the characters. Irrespective of the page numbers of a picturebook, characters are usually fully developed with distinctive characteristics that make them memorable (Lukens 49), but they are generally secondary to the plot. Nonetheless, the reader can deduce characteristics of the agents in a picturebook from both the verbal and the visual content. To exemplify, analyzing the interaction between characters or their behavior when taking part in certain events, enables readers to learn more about the personality of the characters. The most common form of depiction, however, is the narrative description (Nikolajeva and Scott 81-82). Hence, the portrayal of a character is strongly

dependent on the narrative perspective, meaning the position from which the story is told or seen. Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott elaborate on the assumption that the verbal most commonly refers to the narrative voice, whereas the pictures illustrate the point of view (117). Stylistically, with the depiction of objects and colors, an image is able to emphasize and underline what the words tell. Another fairly unique technical choice picturebooks pioneer in is the use of anthropomorphism, or in other words, the presentation of characters with the system of personification, where animals, plants or astronomic objects like the moon or the sun are attributed humanlike behavior or characteristics (Nikolajeva and Scott 211). Given the close relationship between characterization, perspective and style in picturebooks, their importance to support the storyline stands beyond doubt.

Taking all this into consideration, one can conclude that “[t]he picturebook, as a format, arose as something new [...] and it will continue to change and merge with other forms and formats as it evolves” (Sipe, “The Art of the Picturebook.” 250). In the attempt to define picturebooks, the depiction of its recurring (literary) elements has contributed to its status as a specific literary genre. Although many features contribute to the distinctiveness of the picturebook, the verbal and the visual are usually given the most attention due to their influence on every other literary technique. For that reason, the subsequent chapter is dedicated to a more detailed analysis of those two components in a picturebook.

3.2. The Verbal and the Visual – Picturebooks as a Coherent Whole

As shown, a basic understanding of picturebooks immediately associates the existence of words and pictures. Previous literature on picturebooks research clearly reveals the interplay of the verbal and the visual, each pursuing a different purpose, but together creating a coherent whole. Thus, the relationship between the words and the images ascribes this literary genre a status of uniqueness and is a continuing concern among picturebook theorists. In their

comprehensive book *How Picturebooks Work*, Nikolajeva and Scott introduce the dual sign system of representation in picturebooks.

The function of pictures, iconic signs, is to describe or represent. The function of words, conventional signs, is primarily to narrate. Conventional signs are often linear, while iconic signs are nonlinear and do not give us direct instruction about how to read them. The tension between the two functions creates unlimited possibilities for interaction between word and image in a picturebook (1-2).

Publications on picturebook theory suggest multiple terms to describe the interaction between these two signs, although a commonly accepted conceptualization has yet to be agreed upon. An allusion to musical metaphors seems to be an outstanding occurrence in picturebook studies (Sipe, "How Picture Books Work." 97). Sipe perceives "synergy" as the most suitable term to describe the interdependence of words and pictures by stating that "the production of two or more agents [...] combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects" (98). One further outstanding terminology in the attempt to describe the text-image relation is Kristin Hallberg's "notion of iconotext" (qtd. in Nikolajeva and Scott 6). The impossibility of a definite specification alludes to the seemingly endless options in decoding the verbal and the visual in picturebooks. "Text and pictures, in fact, can achieve remarkable effects in contradicting one another, expanding one another, or even limiting one another" (Stevenson 100). This means that pictures do not always merely illustrate the verbal and give a visual representation of what happens. If implemented wisely by the author and the illustrator, both signs challenge the reader to deconstruct the iconotext. Nikolajeva and Scott provide several descriptions on how the images and the text might coincide or differ. In a "symmetrical" picturebook the verbal goes hand in hand with the visual. As soon as "words and pictures [fill] each other's gaps" the picturebook is called "complementary". A picturebook can be "expanding" when the visual supports the verbal or "enhancing" when the verbal depends on the visual. They label a picturebook "counterpointing" in case of "two mutually dependent narratives" or "sylleptic" when "two or more narratives [are] independent of each other". Apart from these varieties in word-image interactions, in their extreme forms, picturebooks feature exclusively words or images (Nikolajeva and Scott 12).

Having established a multiplicity of possible interpretations of the images and the words in picturebooks, an interesting question imposes itself: Which component can be given preference or is the privileging of one over the other an impossible endeavor? Deborah Stevenson approaches this problem by contrasting the view of advocates from the literary world, who she assumes to “consider a picture book as a narrative with pictures” only, with that of more art orientated people “considering the picture book as an art object with extended captions” (92). Although she does not argue in favor of one side at first, she later declares that “[a] picture book can, after all, be a picture book without a text; it can’t be one without pictures” (Stevenson 93).

Stevenson’s assessment has been rendered obsolete in 2014 at the latest, with the publication of *The Book With No Pictures* by B. J. Novak, who has achieved to create a lively and visually sophisticated picturebook, without the implementation of pictures in the conventional sense. In his play with orthographical elements, Novak has defined a new conception for pictures. Due to their pictorial appearance, the depiction of simple words into an artful arrangement compensates the desire for commonly found images. With this innovation, another noteworthy contribution to the picturebook market has been added.

The commanding style in which the book is written likewise characterizes a further peculiarity. On one of the first pages, the reader is confronted with an instruction on how to go about the reading process. The lines read, “Everything the words say, the person reading the book *has* to say” (Novak, original emphasis). The enforcement of adhering to and executing whatever the words demand, initiate an active engagement with the book and almost certainly stimulate laughter on both sides, the reader and the person being read to. What obviously stands out here is the function of reading aloud that is often disregarded when dealing with literature. “Many picture book texts read quite blandly on the page, but their patterns of rhythm and energy appear with force when one speaks them aloud” (Stevenson 94). On grounds of the vivid composition and design of the words, their appearance is not blandly at all, which is why Stevenson’s argument is only partially true for *The Book With No*

Pictures. Nonetheless, the call to read any of the words out loud adds in the highlighting of the dynamic that lies behind. Although in case of picturebooks, adults regularly read to their still illiterate children, reading aloud should receive more distinct attention in general, to verbalize and articulate the different interpretations that otherwise exclusively exist in the mind of the readers (Stevenson 94). What is of crucial importance here is the use of the voice as an instrument to create various effects and convey emotion. With the publication of his book, Novak encourages to read aloud with a variation in pitch as a means of entertainment.

Returning back to the previous discussion about the importance of pictures in picturebooks, this example has demonstrated an innovative way of how picturebooks can fulfill their purpose without images in the conventional sense. Nonetheless, in most cases, one must agree with the aforementioned claim by Stevenson, which is also confirmed by Rebecca J. Lukens, stating that normally “[p]icture books are dependent upon illustrations; some contain text and others are wordless. The design of the whole [...] [is] important” (69). This assertion ideally paves the way for a more detailed analysis of the verbal and the visual in picturebooks.

Our contemporary society is exposed to a flood of visual impressions demanding the ability to interpret and process their meanings. This is exactly what Marica Brown requires by emphasizing that “[a] child can and must be trained in visual awareness if he is to become an aware adult. [...] Each child can be taught to enlarge his horizons” (85). Given her argumentation, children must be acquainted with diverse options to interpret visuals. In their uniqueness regarding the implementation of images, picturebooks bring about a promising effect. There is far more to the pictures than the plain conception of being mere illustrations to the words and visually appealing to the eye. The visuals in picturebooks fulfill several purposes and carry an important function.

In an ideal case, the reading of an illustration “conveys intentional and unintentional meaning, [and] imparts the story” (Stevenson 95). In contrast to that, if poorly drawn, illustrations run the risk of changing the story in a negative

way. Consequently, pictures are powerful tools in the sense that they can alter the storyline. Further, the effective use of images often also greatly influences the story. Lukens refers to such a case as “a two-dimensional story” (46), whereby the text and the images do not automatically always coincide. As has been shown above, the pictures may depict some pieces of information that the text does not render. Making use of such a technique adds in the success of the picturebook, due to the creation of suspense or the evocation of emotion in the reader and equally emphasizes the value of the pictures.

To elaborate, it is worthwhile to introduce another primary source in this context, exemplifying the theoretical insights on the power of images. In *This Is Not My Hat* by Jon Klassen (2012), the reader accompanies a little fish who has stolen a hat. Even though it is conscious about its delict, it allows itself to be lulled into a false sense of security and believes in remaining undiscovered. This is illustrated through the following sentence, “Nobody will ever find me” (Klassen). What the little fish does not know is that the owner of the hat is close on its tail, which, however, is clearly obvious to the reader through the images. With the help of this technique, he or she finds himself or herself in an omniscient position with regard to the events in the story, as opposed to the protagonist. Thereby, tension is created until the end through the counterpointing interplay of the verbal and the visual.

Although it has been mentioned that regularly words carry the narrative function, Nodelman asserts that “[a]ll pictures in picture books have narrative functions” as well (*Words about Pictures* 98, original emphasis). Only a close reading and profound investigation of the images can disclose a whole story within the visual, as a gradual engagement enables to notice all the details they contain. The interplay of visual elements and attributes, such as colors and shapes or position of the characters, underlines the disposition of the characters and influences the interpretation of the book (Lukens 40; Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 98).

Probably one of the most outstanding categories in the discussion about the visual reading of picturebooks is the color. Generally, it is clear that color can be

interpreted in different ways, which is dependent on personal experiences or cultural constructions. Every reader adopts different attitudes to one particular color and associates either feelings of affection or reluctance. The reading of one and the same picturebook within different geographical boundaries might easily evoke completely diverging interpretations. The Asian interpretation for one color does not always correspond with the European one, for example. Sipe exemplifies this by referring to the dissimilarities in the color white which for some cultures in Asia represents something negative, such as grief. Europeans usually demonstrate a positive association with white ("The Art of the Picturebook." 238). Correspondingly, the interpretation of images in picturebooks depends on where the audience is reading the book as well as the background the individuals come from. It is thus personally and culturally determined.

While the colors of the illustrations in picturebooks are frequently imagined as very bright and flamboyant, it is a myth that the readers, and especially children, desire highly colorful picturebooks. Rather, as long as the colors are "harmonious and appropriate to the subject", they will be deemed suitable (Brown 87). As will be demonstrated in the close reading of a sample selection of picturebooks in chapter five, some authors cleverly play with colors. The moment of page turning is often accompanied by a change in colors suitable to the characters, the situation or the setting on the respective double spread, for example.

Due to the brevity of picturebooks, great responsibility lies in the pictures regarding the depiction of the setting, the surrounding, and the series of events. Nikolajeva and Scott credit images with their ability to provide "an 'omnipresent' perspective" (119). As aforementioned, picturebooks tend to be more plot oriented, downplaying other narrative devices. In its details and entirety, the setting, for instance, is often merely perceived through the illustrations (Lukens 57). Through a close engagement with images, the reader can obtain more detailed information on the events of the book. To clarify, I want to refer to two specific examples in Ute Krause's picturebook *No Ordinary Family* (2013). After the separation of their parents, the little bandit siblings refuse to be friends with

their new step-siblings, the little princes and princesses. Trying to find a way out of “the worst day ever [...] Eddie had a great idea” (Krause). The execution of Eddie’s plan to shackle their stepbrothers and stepsisters is exclusively illustrated in the images. The second instance involves an event, or more specifically, a party. By a plain reading of the words, the reader only learns that they “throw wild parties” (Krause). What characterizes their parties as wild is again only mediated through the pictures. The very last double spread in the book portrays, among other scenes, a spitfire taking on the role of the barbecue lighter and the bandits, princes and princesses flying on dragons. In this respect, the visual outweighs the verbal in the possibility to display emotion and a certain amount of information.

Together with the illustrator, the author decides on how to visually support the verbal or how a picture can tell a story in its own. Thereby, the “illustration uses symbolic language for communication” (Lukens 40) in need of interpretation. Nodelman draws on the fact that the way one infers meaning from a given illustration is contingent on our perception of a specific purpose of a picture (*Words about Pictures* 15). Despite the possibility to deduce a different meaning from one and the same picture, “[t]he ‘language’ of pictures is generally regarded as international, capable of transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries” (O’Sullivan, “Translating Pictures.” 117).

Having established the importance of the visual it can be concluded that dependent on their arrangement, illustrations fulfill the purpose of “[bringing] a text to life on the pages of a book and in the mind of the reader” (Hillmann 83). These words suitably bridge the discussion of the visual with the analysis of the verbal. An effective choice of words in the picturebook can leave a remarkable effect on the reader. The verbal can either be “prose or rhymed; present tense or past; first person, second person, or third person” (Stevenson 94) shaping the text accordingly. Stevenson reflects on the impact of words from an adult perspective and consciously affirms a massive contribution to the lesson children learn from a picturebook triggered through the choice of words.

The writing of a storyline primarily happens prior to the designing of illustrations. This is why Nodelman denies the likability of coming to a reasonable conclusion with a mere analysis of the visuals and simultaneously demands an adequate study of the verbal (*Words about Pictures* 40). Although Stevenson values both, the narrative as well as the illustration, from her argumentation it becomes clear that she focuses largely on the text. According to her, the success of a picturebook, depending on its pedagogic, social or political purpose, has its roots in the text (Stevenson 94). Despite children usually being the primary audience for picturebooks, the language can at times remain sophisticated. A picturebook author bears great responsibility in the sense that the concepts of language and literature require a demanding and yet child-orientated presentation for the purpose of entertainment and conveyance of a particular lesson. Therefore, style clearly matters.

From the viewpoint of a parent, the decision to buy a specific picturebook might therefore be made on the basis of the suitability in terms of the narrative. Nonetheless, I would claim that the majority rather opts for a picturebook that also displays appealing illustrations. Accordingly, given a potential lack of information about the impact of both parts, the visual could be seen as superior to the verbal. Nikolajeva and Scott declare the origin of this phenomenon lying in an imbalance of possible tools to analyze the visual and the verbal. Even though existing literature on the deconstruction of picturebooks already includes a great spectrum of methods on how to approach the visual component, they demand more ideas on how to examine the text effectively. In general, they criticize the valuation of the verbal as too insufficient (4). In the attempt to equally balance the investigation of the verbal and the visual, admittedly, I must report a similar conclusion. Less attention is drawn to the construction of words in picturebooks.

Still, the dependence of words and pictures on each other is beyond doubt. Referring back to the initial question concerning a potential prioritizing of either the verbal or the visual, a review on the insights gained evidently declares the impossibility of perceiving one as more important than the other. Therefore, I agree with Sipe when he argues, “[t]he text-picture relationship is not so much a

matter of a balance of power as it is the way in which the text and pictures transact with each other, and transform each other” (“How Picture Books Work.” 98). Lukens even labels the interaction between them “marriage” in order to emphasize their interdependence (43).

Moving beyond the importance of the relationship between the words and the images, picturebooks as such offer far more features worthwhile to be analyzed.

Even before children can read books, the sheer physicality of a volume is very important to them; they are little inclined to abstract ‘text’ or ‘pictures’ from the construct of the book. Various studies have made it clear that physical makeup of a book greatly affects a child’s response to it [...] (Stevenson 97).

This means that picturebooks deserve to be valued as a composite whole as their composition and design assigns them a status of distinctiveness (Stevenson 97-98; Mourão 71). The appreciation of any features of design, consolidated under the umbrella term “peritext”, is often disregarded, however, deliberately used in picturebooks to emphasize the unity. Sandie Mourão further elaborates that the peritext contains “all the features that frame a text” (71-72). Most significantly, the front and the back cover as well as the endpapers often already display noteworthy information on the content of the book. Mourão immediately encourages researchers not to underestimate the functions they fulfill; not only do they add in the visually appealing design but, more importantly, they stimulate reflections about a possible storyline and its acting agents in specific surroundings (73).

In this section, it has been shown that a picturebook requires a thorough investigation in order to understand its complexity. As the name implies, a picturebook is most obviously and commonly characterized through a relationship between the verbal and the visual used as powerful tools to convey meaning. “The most important step is taking time to look and absorb details of both the visual and the verbal texts and then becoming conscious of the ways in which they communicate to us” (Schwenke Wyle and Rosenberg 82). Despite the predominance of the words and the images, an appreciation of additional peritextual features that contribute to the success of a picturebook must not be disregarded.

3.3. Identity and Alterity in Picturebooks

Considering the importance and functions of themes in literature, the following chapter is dedicated to an analysis of how the central issues of this thesis, identity and alterity, are addressed in famous classical and more contemporary examples of picturebooks.

Prior to the continuous rise in new media supply, children's literature has long been the primary medium that contributed largely in the depiction of the other and shaped the children's views about othering. As the youngest should be taught the essence of social education and acceptance, the implementation of picturebooks is most certainly a valuable approach to promote social learning (O'Sullivan, "Children's Literature." 290). In light of the impact that picturebooks have had on children in forming an opinion about othering, it is therefore worthwhile to provide a short glance into the historical development of identity and alterity in picturebooks.

As has been pointed out, it is important to keep in mind the position of the reader when analyzing a picturebook. Perhaps unsurprisingly, highly negative portrayals of other nations or races in European children's literature peeked during the time of the Great World Wars. The depiction of judgmental images was "used as propaganda to mobilize the youth" (O'Sullivan, "Children's Literature." 293). The indefensibility of the abuse of children's books in this case is beyond doubt. Referring back to the aforementioned moment in history, the marginalization of the Jews during World War II marks one of the most cruel examples of othering that was, moreover, clearly represented in picturebooks. Published in 1938, the German propaganda book *Der Giftpilz* by Ernst Hiemer demonstrates the indoctrinating education children were exposed to in the 1930s and 1940s. Several sequencing stories render active Jew-baiting and depict the Jews as the enemy to the Aryan German majority of society (Lindquist 53). To exemplify, one image illustrates a blond German woman telling her son to stay away from the Jews.

Schau, Franz, mit den Menschen auf der Welt ist es genauso wie mit den Pilzen im Wald. Es gibt gute Pilze und gute Menschen. Es gibt aber auch giftige, böse Pilze und böse Menschen. Und wir müssen uns von bösen Menschen hüten genauso wie vor giftigen Pilzen. (Hiemer 7)

Fortunately, a less propagandistic representation of social issues in picturebooks gradually develops. Towards the end of the twentieth century and until now, it became more and more common to include a range of societally essential themes that cause or demand a change of thinking (Hillmann 101).

Lukens rightfully asserts that, in general, picturebooks cover a tremendously high number of different themes. Not only does she refer to identity and alterity as being two favorable themes to create a storyline (56), but also I would conclude that the quest for identity and the performance of othering are among the most frequently found themes in this genre. In terms of my research and closer occupation with picturebooks, my previous assumption, that identity and alterity have relevance to a wide audience including but not being limited to children, was confirmed. Therefore, these topics lend themselves perfectly to be dealt with in picturebooks. As children are the main target audience of picturebooks it is necessary to present the issues in a child oriented manner. Due to the complexity that lies behind the two concepts, however, picturebook authors face the challenge of finding an adequate way of presentation that children can understand and relate to when they read or are read to.

The depiction and performance of the characters is decisive for how the process of othering is conveyed through the picturebook. When examining a sample selection that deals with otherness, it becomes obvious straight away that othering does not necessarily have to be performed on or among humans. The protagonists or characters that face othering are frequently animals or objects. Thereby, their role within a community can result in being stigmatized as the odd one out (confer *Something Else*) or occupying a special position within a group (confer *Elmer*). As has been discussed, with the ascription of anthropomorphic features, the characters in picturebooks are treated like humans and represent humanlike behavior. In doing so, anthropomorphism fulfills the clear function of avoiding direct identification with the characters. Still, it is possible to understand the consequences and actions that underlie. Shane

DeRolf's *The Crayon Box That Talked* (1996) perfectly shows how in a picturebook world, even crayons can experience the same feelings of anger, sadness or happiness. In short, the book tells the story of "a box of crayons [t]hat doesn't get along" (DeRolf). In their individuality, the crayons initially fail to realize that as a group they can create a beautiful piece of art and only in the end learn to like each other.

We are a box of crayons,
Each one of us unique.
But when we get together...
The picture is complete. (DeRolf)

This example shows that mutual appreciation can help in the prevention of negative consequences of alterity. Another famous picturebook underlines how closely identity and alterity are related to each other, namely *Little I-Am-Me*. With the publication of this story, the author Mira Lobe and the illustrator Susi Weigel made an outstanding contribution to the picturebook canon. Published in 1972, the book has sparked interest in the issues of identity and alterity ever since. The story has gained almost worldwide recognition, due to a translation of the original Austrian German version into several other languages (Seibert et al. 19-21). During the quest for its own identity a little colorful creature recurrently asks "[w]ho [or] what am I?" (Lobe) and is constantly rejected by all the other, clearly distinguishable animals, such as the fish or the dogs. Due to the creature's differences in visual appearance the fish say "But whatever you wish / You're never a fish!" and the dogs claim "It's easy as falling off a log / To see that you are not a dog" (Lobe). Again, it is the end that signals the climax in the story when the little creature suddenly realizes a crucial fact.

It pulls itself together, stops and says out loud,
'True, it's a fact I'm not one of a crowd,
But of course I'd be missed,
Because I exist –
I AM ME!' (Lobe)

In other words, one possible interpretation and function of the book is, as the title already suggests, to promote an acceptance primarily of the own self, or in fact, one's own identity.

In the case of *Little I-Am-Me*, the protagonist struggles to find its identity predominantly because of visual distinctions to the other animals that hinder a categorization of Little I-Am-Me to a specific species. Based on these differences, the character feels excluded. Andy Cutbill's picturebook *The Cow That Laid an Egg* (2007) provides inspiration for a further and distinguished reflection on the previous outcomes of exclusion and inclusion markers in identity studies. One could critically enquire whether the yearning for being different and recognizable is a form of exclusion. In the case of this particular picturebook, the reader encounters the protagonist Marjorie, a cow, who purposefully intends to highlight any categories of difference. She expresses her dissatisfaction concerning her state of being by declaring, "I don't feel special [...] I just feel so ordinary" (Cutbill) and desperately wishes to set herself apart from the other cows and adopt distinct identity markers, thereby excluding herself from the majority. Interestingly, the term majority denotes a clear similarity to the name of the main character.

Just as in *The Cow That Laid an Egg*, also in Lobe's book, the protagonist's name denotes interesting similarities to the occurrences in the progress of the story. As will be demonstrated in the following in-depth analysis of selected primary examples, an effective choice of name for the characters can achieve remarkable impacts. In other words, character names are not chosen unintentionally, which prompts a discussion of their significance. The importance of names leads to an interesting conclusion by Lukens that ideally suits the topic of this chapter. "[H]aving one's name ridiculed makes one miserable, but approval can change self-image" (56).

To highlight once more, when dealing with identity and alterity in picturebooks, great responsibility lies on the author, who must translate delicate themes from a meta level onto one that children can grasp. This often happens through the depiction of specific characters which through their actions familiarize children or the older reader with the issues covered in the story. As this section demonstrated, identity crises or othering in picturebooks not only concern humans, but also humanlike animals and objects. Due to this abstractness in

picturebooks, the characters prove to be useful in delivering the concepts of identity and alterity.

4. Not Just For Little Kids – Picturebooks with Young Adults

As the title of the chapter already indicates³, picturebooks are frequently misperceived as being exclusively interesting to very young children. Research has proven, however, that depending on the composition and topic, they also attract a wider audience. Hence, this chapter should provide a contribution to a more contemporary understanding of picturebooks and their suitability to children, teenagers and adults of all ages. The theoretical concept that lies behind this broadening of the expected audience is called “cross-reading”. According to Rachel Falconer, crossover literature refers to “fiction, aimed at a primary audience of child readers, but also engaging substantial numbers of adult readers” (366). Subordinating picturebooks to the genre of crossover literature makes sense due to the fact that they greatly exceed the primary audience of children. Although it is beyond a doubt that picturebooks do appeal to children, the existence of the phenomenon of crossover literature substantiates a further reflection on why they are also suitable for young adults, the main target audience for this project.

Ongoing developments in picturebook research let scholars assume that the market will continuously offer more picturebooks that appeal more to an elder audience because of their complexity in language, style and topics (Sipe, “The Art of the Picturebook.” 247). Especially for non-native speakers of English, picturebooks enable a reader to work with authentic material and are reliable sources for language learning. Therefore, this genre is definitely of interest to foreign language teachers and learners. A comprehension of the topics of identity and alterity requires several social skills, such as feeling empathy,

³ Concerning the title, credit must be given to Jane E. Appelt using the same words to caption her article, in which she promotes picturebooks to a broad audience.

mutual respect and tolerance. There is no doubt that the foundation for all these abilities are best laid during childhood, for which picturebooks serve as an ideal support in awareness raising. Considering the acquisition of social competences to be a lifelong process, however, none of them cease with adulthood.

This ties in nicely with another noteworthy argument brought forward by Hillmann who mentions that we tend to forget that picturebooks are primarily “not meant to be read *by* young children, but read *to* them” (102, original emphasis). Accordingly, she favors a widening of the readership of picturebooks, since the youngest are not yet able to grasp the potentials of that genre, being dependent on a reader. The older they grow and the more advanced their cognitive skills and their world knowledge become, the greater the benefits they can gain from reading a picturebook with a specific focus. Every step in development significantly enhances the ability of a more sophisticated examination. Furthermore, special reading skills are often needed in order to appreciate the book as a whole and fully deduce the meaning implied. The more that is known about the possible techniques of this genre, the more the audience can interpret the story and engage in a profound analysis.

Furthermore, in her contribution to picturebook studies, Janet Evans adheres to the view of a picturebook being “an art object, an aesthetic whole” (99). Her assessment is again proof of the need to value it as an entire unit. Yet, what unequivocally stands out here is the comparison of the literary genre to art. “It is often the case that children’s first experience of truly excellent and high-quality art happens when picturebooks are shared with them” (Sipe, “The Art of the Picturebook.” 245). According to this evaluation, the parallel to art drawn by Evans gains in sophistication. No official guidelines prescribe the interpretation of art, as it is an exceptionally subjective domain. Similar to reading skills, the benefits depend on the amount of knowledge about art that a person has at his or her command. The reference to art in the discussion of picturebooks certainly supports the move beyond children as the main audience. Caution must be applied not to narrow down art exclusively to the visual component. The

previous section has already outlined that the limitation of picturebooks to either the verbal or the visual would minimize their effects.

Given the number of arguments that include (young) adults as an important readership of picturebooks, serious reservations may be raised against Nodelman's assertion that children are the sole audience for picturebooks.

The picturebook is, I believe, the one form of literature invented specifically for audiences of children – and despite recent claims for a growing adult audience for more sophisticated books, the picturebook remains firmly connected to the idea of an implied child-reader/viewer. (“Words Claimed.” 11)

In other words, Nodelman stresses his dissatisfaction with the increase in advocates for picturebooks being of interest to a broader audience, not just children. Despite the ray of truth in children being the main audience, the preceding counter arguments render his view partially obsolete, which definitely suits the purpose of this paper. Having established that the audience of picturebooks is considerably larger than expected, attention will now be drawn to the potentials of the genre in the Austrian EFL classroom.

4.1. Picturebooks in the (Austrian) EFL Classroom

Examining how picturebooks are used within a school context, Sipe estimates that only a small number of teachers (in EFL classrooms) integrate this literary genre in their lessons in secondary or even higher education, but praises those who do (“The Art of the Picturebook.” 245). Unfortunately, it is true that, when implemented in Austrian schools, picturebooks are most frequently used in primary schools. However, I will argue that with picturebooks, a teacher can mediate numerous aspects relevant not just to language but also to social learning. For an Austrian language teacher of English it is important to equally weigh the four language skills, reading, listening, writing and speaking along with the treatment of general didactic and social objectives (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache Oberstufe np). Before a more profound investigation into the aims and objectives in Austrian language teaching in chapter six, this section aims at offering a short glance into possibilities on how to implement

picturebooks in the EFL classroom in a way that appeals to a variety of students and achieves the desirable dual effect.

A picturebook features numerous characteristics that make them suitable for EFL and ELT. Resonating with Jane E. Appelt's summary of the most outstanding points, the following three major reasons justify the implementation of picturebooks in the classroom. Firstly, the language level facilitates understanding and enables their use among any grade. Secondly, given the variety in themes and issues, every student will find a book which will be of his or her personal interest. Thirdly, due to their brevity in length it is possible to easily finish a whole book within a short time frame and use it as a means of teaching in combination with other activities (69).

One might associate reading as the primary related skill to be trained with this form of literature. Considering the multiple dimensions of a picturebook, there is more to it than solely a reading activity. To elaborate, implementing picturebooks in the classroom provides ample opportunities for the teacher to encourage and involve students in writing or speaking activities of all kinds. Speaking for the context of Austrian schools, some language teachers frequently work with visual aids to stimulate oral or written work. The interpretation of pictures requires a certain proficiency level in grammar and vocabulary but simultaneously fosters students' creativity (Hillmann 94). Although it is not uncommon to use comics or illustrations from schoolbooks, advertisements or paintings, the use of picturebooks, wordless ones in particular, only rarely functions as a means to support the two productive language skills. The importance of the visual to encourage speaking gives rise to the introduction of a vital concept in skills-based language learning, an image analysis. Fulfilling the requirements for the standards in the EFL classroom, this principle aims at enabling "die SchülerInnen zu einer kompetenten und kritischen Analyse, Interpretation und De-Konstruktion von (historischen) Bildern" (Krammer qtd. in Mayrhofer 1). Despite its regular use to establish a historical context, an image analysis is also valuable in combination with picturebooks in the language classroom as it can offer opportunities to discuss and interpret certain functions of the book. During such a negotiation process,

various language skills are needed and trained. Listening skills, for example, are enhanced through a combination of the other skills, particularly speaking due to an ongoing interaction. As aforementioned, along with the training of language skills, picturebooks also facilitate the treatment of specific social issues (Appelt 73). Especially in case of a sensitive thematic focus such as alterity it is crucial to argue over viewpoints and clarify potential consequences of othering. This once more highlights oral communication, but also requires a thoughtful approach towards the theme by the teacher.

Although nearly any picturebook lends itself to discuss possible functions and interpretations, the selection process is in need of reflective evaluation as to whether the individual picturebook fits the given the objectives and requirements anchored in the respective curriculum. Adults must decide on the issues, morals and values most suitable for child readers (O'Sullivan, "Children's Literature." 290). Given the differences in cognitive abilities and background knowledge, the assessment of children's needs is definitely a difficult endeavor for the teacher. Prior to the creation of tasks, "it is important to consider the sociocultural contexts of the school situations in which picturebooks are often used" (Sipe, "The Art of the Picturebook." 245) in order to avoid feelings of offense or misinterpretations.

After having established the needs of the addressees along with the choice of book, the creation of tasks to achieve the intended aims follows. Working with literature in the EFL classroom requires an incremental approach towards the issue and the content. From personal experience, I wholeheartedly agree with Mourão, who claims that working with peritextual features serves as an ideal pre-reading activity. In fact, making predictions about a book according to the cover and the endpapers without giving away the content or specific details are among the most favored activities for teachers to engage their students before reading (73). While reading, the teacher has to ensure that "students can imagine themselves in the world of a [book], [...] [to] understand the worldviews that inform characters' attitudes and beliefs" (Taliaferro 30). An effective guidance regarding the teaching of delicate issues furthermore necessitates well thought-through post-reading activities. Referring back, writing or speaking

activities provide opportunities for the students to newly reflect on what they have learned, by producing something personal in relation to the given input.

To briefly recap, in general, language and social learning are fundamentally inseparable as the receptive and productive language skills presuppose the familiarization with any given topic. Using picturebooks to their full extent in the language classroom enables teachers to plan varied and innovative lessons. To adopt Judy Beckman's and Joan Diamond's label for picturebooks, I am also convinced that they are "the secret weapon for the creative teacher" (102) to help students acquire language skills and become familiar with social issues. For this thesis, especially the latter are of distinct interest and refer to a key concept in Austrian teaching, ICL, which will be subject of discussion in the following section.

4.1.1. Intercultural Learning in the Austrian Curriculum

So far, this thesis has outlined reasons for using picturebooks in the classroom and likewise revealed their suitability for the teaching of social skills, as they provide "the power to humanize us – to help us understand the [...] perspectives [...] of others" (Murphy 22). Given the globalized world and a significant rise in international relations, schools must follow the trend and provide students with different worldviews, more formally known as ICL, the pedagogical field that enables individuals to learn more about cultural diversity. Although ICL has generally gained recognition among scholars, some still reject the term intercultural, since cultures would then be seen as "homogeneous and separated spheres [...] and [...] thus inappropriate" bearing in mind "today's coexisting and cooperating cultures" (Doff 361). Hence, literature on this matter includes different terminology, all of which point to the same core idea, yet show slight distinctions regarding interpretation. Apart from ICL / Intercultural Education⁴, publications further suggest the pedagogy of multicultural education

⁴ As education is contingent on learning and vice versa ICL and intercultural education are equated in this context.

or other terms such as transculturality or Fremdverstehen, to describe the encounter between nations.

The *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* provide a definition for inter- and multicultural education.

The term multicultural describes the culturally diverse nature of human society. It not only refers to elements of ethnic or national culture, but also includes linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity. Interculturality is a dynamic concept and refers to evolving relations between cultural groups. [...] Interculturality presupposes multiculturalism and results from 'intercultural' exchange and dialogue on the local, regional, national or international level. (17)

To elaborate, multicultural education, on the one hand, means to learn something about other cultures, seeking for tolerance and ideally acceptance of the other. ICL, on the other hand, represents a more dynamic approach towards the foreign by suggesting active participation in the culturally diverse surroundings. The main principle here is interactive learning with other cultures (UNESCO 18).

Werner Delanoy proposes the term transcultural as more appropriate than intercultural, as it appreciates "the creation of new hybrid constellations" (233). Again, interculturality and transculturality lie closely together and are not always clearly distinguishable. As they equally value the deconstruction of identities and raise awareness to in how far culture determines identity, a distinction is, in fact, not always necessary. Considering the aim of cultural approximation, Lothar Bredella, Franz-Joseph Meißner, Ansgar Nünning and Dietmar Rösler introduce the German term Fremdverstehen, which signifies the attempt to understand something foreign, in a context other than the known. He elucidates his thoughts by reference to language learning.

Wenn wir beispielsweise Phänomene der fremden Sprache verstehen wollen, dürfen wir sie nicht im Kontext unserer Muttersprache, sondern müssen sie in dem der Fremdsprache sehen. Das heißt, es gibt Situationen, in denen wir einen fremden Kontext im Gegensatz zum eigenen berücksichtigen müssen, um bestimmte Phänomene angemessen in den Blick zu bekommen. (Bredella et al. xii - xiii)

His view on Fremdverstehen is dependent on a change of perspective that influences the perception of an other.

The aforementioned *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* play a major role for Austria's pedagogic and didactic requirements. They include objectives for intercultural education in schools subsumed under the "four pillars of education" advocated by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century. In short, they require "learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be" (UNESCO 19). In view of the complexity that lies behind the notion of ICL, a successful anchoring of the basic principles in the (Austrian) curricula is dependent on an adequate learning environment.

Leaving aside the inconsistent use of terms to describe the central understanding of cross-cultural encounters, the aims for teachers are unmistakably clear. Particularly in a school setting, the academic discrepancies in terminology are of minor significance and the emphasis in a secondary educational context rather lies on increasing the students' consciousness to the consequences of the world being a melting pot and the accompanying need for openness and tolerance. For the purpose of this research, I will persistently use the term interculturality in accordance with the official name in the Austrian curriculum.

In 2007 Bolten claimed, "[i]nterkulturelles Lernen ist bislang eine Domäne des tertiären Bildungsbereiches. Dies wird sich [...] auch in nächster Zukunft nicht ändern" (108). The Austrian school curriculum for Allgemein bildende Höhere Schulen (AHS) clearly prescribes the communication of ICL among all subjects. Therefore, eight years later, the requirements for teachers in Austrian grammar schools clearly prove his assertion to be mistaken.

The term culture in ICL might mislead readers to a too narrowed interpretation, meaning to solely gain information about and accepting the other culture. However, ICL is a broader field, contains multiple layers and is anchored in the Austrian curriculum as follows:

Interkulturelles Lernen beschränkt sich nicht bloß darauf, andere Kulturen kennen zu lernen. Vielmehr geht es um das gemeinsame Lernen und das Begreifen, Erleben und Mitgestalten kultureller Werte. Aber es geht auch darum [...] Vielfalt als wertvoll erfahrbar zu machen. Durch die identitätsbildende Wirkung des Erfahrens von Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden [...] sind die Schülerinnen und Schüler zu Akzeptanz, Respekt und gegenseitiger Achtung zu führen. (BMBF, Zweiter Teil np)

The unambiguous message calls for a valuation of similarities and differences with the aim of mutual tolerance and more importantly acceptance and even valuation of others. Learning something about the other is simultaneously paralleled by a critical reflection of the own self. Thereby, ICL also refers to an encompassing deconstruction of identities that goes beyond cultural customs. As has been shown, a person's identity cannot be limited exclusively to the cultural element, as identity is multilayered. Considering this, addressing identity and alterity in class can doubtlessly be labeled ICL, consequently calling for openness and maintaining the desire to know more about others. The importance to adopt such an attitude accounts for both, the teacher and the student. In an ideal case, through cooperation, learners come to the conclusion "that the Other leaves us with no choice but to embrace our neighbor" (Lim 258).

As ICL is anchored among the general didactic objectives in the curriculum an adequate coverage of its principles is demanded of teachers, also language teachers as it is valued "as a new orientation for ELT" (Delanoy and Volkmann 13). While in the general principle the term ICL is used, the curriculum for second language learning writes about intercultural competence. Thereby, the command of productive skills in language learning occupies the foreground. For both lower and upper secondary, the aim of a familiarization of EFL students with a globalized perspective is entitled *Interkulturelle Kompetenz*.

Durch interkulturelle Themenstellungen ist die Sensibilisierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler für die Sprachenvielfalt Europas und der Welt zu verstärken. Aufgeschlossenheit gegenüber Nachbarsprachen – bzw. gegenüber Sprachen von autochthonen Minderheiten und Arbeitsmigrantinnen und –migranten des eigenen Landes – zu fördern und insgesamt das Verständnis für andere Kulturen und Lebensweisen zu vertiefen. (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache Oberstufe np)

John Corbett defines a clear goal for intercultural language learning, namely the “intercultural communicative competence” (2). The acquisition of a certain proficiency level in the foreign language is one of the most important steps in a language classroom. The interaction in another language reveals a connection with a foreign community, which explains the desire for achieving a certain level of communicative competence. As demonstrated, in recent years, the trend has gone in the direction of accepting and appreciating cultural diversity. A more objective and yet critical reflection should enable us to perceive the differences as a chance to develop a consciousness about one’s own identity (Corbett 2-3).

In addition, EFL teachers find themselves in the happy position of having seemingly unlimited possibilities to integrate ICL into their lessons.

Der Prozess des Fremdsprachenerwerbs bietet auch zahlreiche Möglichkeiten der Auseinandersetzung mit interkulturellen Themen. Das bewusste Aufgreifen solcher Fragestellungen soll zu einer verstärkten Sensibilisierung der Schülerinnen und Schüler für kulturelle Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede führen und ihr Verständnis für die Vielfalt von Kulturen und Lebensweisen vertiefen. Dabei ist die Reflexion über eigene Erfahrungen und österreichische Gegebenheiten einzubeziehen. (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache Unterstufe np)

First of all, with regard to one of the main aims, the centrality of the foreign language provides enough space for interaction and improvement of the language skills. ICL, though, does not necessarily have to be undertaken by means of the target language. Taking the multilingual reality in Austrian schools and the fact that language is the tool for teaching and learning into further consideration, modern language teachers are explicitly encouraged to take student’s linguistic background into account.

Wenn sich Schülerinnen und Schüler im Klassenverband befinden, denen Fremdsprachen als Muttersprachen bzw. als Zweitsprachen innerhalb der Familie dienen, sind deren besondere Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten im Unterricht sowohl individuell zu fördern als auch in der Klassengemeinschaft zu nutzen. (BMBF, Lebende Fremdsprache Oberstufe np)

Accordingly, teachers should see the linguistically diverse EFL classroom as a steppingstone that facilitates access to interculturality.

Furthermore, and more important for this thesis is the introduction of literature, hence also picturebooks, as a means to teach ICL. The reading not only enhances the language skills but also reflects real world occurrences. “[L]iterary texts [...] can vividly illustrate aspects of an entire society [and] [...] sum up [...] profound societal changes” (Corbett 173). The medium book provides the opportunity to virtually immerse oneself in a different, fictional world. The more that is known about the social and cultural world of the others, the greater the comprehension for specific actions or customs. The readership’s perception is shaped and enhanced by the authentic depiction of characters in certain events in literature. The literary world enables readers to see through the eyes of the performing agents, thereby encountering the unknown. Through thorough reflection, the individual might renegotiate their own complex identity and reconsider the perception of the other (Matos 57).

Despite the implicit trust in the effect of picturebooks in the EFL classroom, the present use of the subjunctive already hints towards the need to mention potential dangers. The responsibility is again on the teacher to opt for the most suitable books that appeal to and fulfill the needs of the students. Moreover, it is likely idealistic to suppose that all students undergo a change of thinking after having read a book in class. After all, acquiring intercultural competence is a long and highly complex process requiring continuous attention. Aspirations that are too high might not be fully met, but initiate a critical reflection. Developing a greater understanding for differences is realistic and definitely achievable (Matos 101).

Nonetheless, in light of all the outcomes so far, literature, and picturebooks in particular do offer an added value to the teaching of ICL in an EFL context. Especially for Austrian teachers, addressing intercultural aspects is required due to precise aims and objectives anchored in the respective curricula. The closer examination of two specific syllabuses revealed a difference in terminology between the interdisciplinary and the foreign language curriculum. Apart from the linguistic focus, in its core message, the educational mandate for Austrian foreign language learning does not seriously deviate from the general didactic aims. This justifies including intercultural competence as part of ICL.

ICL enables to perceive the bigger picture and learn to value differences deviating from the known. “This is lifelong learning and it goes beyond the discourse *about* otherness or alterity to become a meeting and a dialogue *with* otherness” (Matos 58, original emphasis).

5. A Close Reading of a Sample Selection

With the theoretical insights in mind, this chapter is now devoted to the analytical part of the thesis. The individual and close reading of *Elmer* by David McKee, *Something Else* by Kathryn Cave and *It’s Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr serves the purpose of answering how alterity is addressed in picturebooks, before their parallels and differences are directly juxtaposed in a final reflective analysis.

Prior to the engagement in a thorough investigation of the three selected picturebooks on alterity, it is important to mention two general remarks. As picturebooks do not have page numbers, any direct quotes are exclusively cited with the author’s name in a parenthetical reference. Furthermore, one major issue concerns the frequently used term message in picturebook theory. As has been discussed, a picturebook is generally supposed to deliver a particular lesson or message, often with a social or didactic focus. Still, the term must be applied with caution, as the reader can never be certain about an author’s intention. It is rather the function that the story fulfills that can be analyzed. I am conscious about the possible limitations that the term message can bring with the result of narrowing a book down to only one specific purpose. Most importantly, a picturebook should aid in understanding the world and broaden our horizon beyond existing knowledge by recognizing similarities or differences to the performing, fictional characters (Lukens 4-5), which is what the following analyses specialize in.

5.1. Elmer

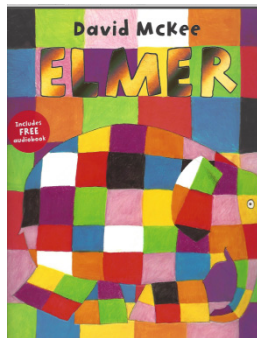


Fig. 2: Elmer Cover

Illustration taken from
McKee, cover page

The title of this picturebook already alludes to the name of the main character. For his story McKee created an elephant named Elmer, whom the reader encounters as visually special and different in comparison to the other elephants in the book. His skin is a patchwork of yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, blue, green, black and white, arranged in squares all over his body. His colorful appearance is a stark contrast to all other elephants in the story, who have a normal grey elephant color. This difference is the reason for his fervent wish to adapt to the others in the herd. “[A] large bush covered with elephant-coloured berries” (McKee) should serve as the key to help Elmer transform into an elephant whose color looks like the others. His plan seems to prove successful in the beginning, as “he wasn’t recognised” and “[n]one of them noticed Elmer as he worked his way to the middle of the herd” (McKee). His incognito presence among the crowd only lasts, though, until the rain washes away his grey color. After having been exposed, Elmer’s attempt at fitting in is deemed his best joke of all time and triggers the invention of a so-called “Elmer’s Day” (McKee). Although Elmer did not reach his goal of hiding his eye-catching patterns and blending in with the herd, his plan end with an appreciation and celebration of his differences.

Straight at the beginning, the reader encounters Elmer after a presentation of a herd of other elephants. They are categorized as being, “elephants young, elephants old, elephants tall, or fat or thin” (McKee), among other descriptors. None of the grey elephants is given a name or gender, and none merit specific attention. Their markers of difference only lie in physical distinctions. Even though their differences in relation to each other and their individuality are stressed, it is still Elmer who represents the most striking difference that sets him apart from the crowd. This puts the colorful elephant in an extraordinary position, compared to his grey friends. Regarding Elmer’s friends, one can initiate an interesting and crucial discussion in relation to the consequences of othering. As has been discussed, alterity frequently implicates exclusion by

stigmatizing any norm deviances. One would assume that someone with such obvious differentiation markers would be excluded by the group, but in fact, this story is unique because the characters seemingly switch roles, and Elmer occupies the position of the usually more dominant one by excluding himself. It is not the other grey elephants who laugh about or criticize Elmer for being multicolored. By enquiring, “Whoever heard of a patchwork elephant?” (McKee), he expresses his dissatisfaction. Thus, having such colorful skin causes him to leave the group and pursue his wish to blend in and be part of the collective identity of grey elephants. He himself yearns for a less noticeable identity, the ability to call himself a normal elephant and feel a sense of belonging. The interaction between the elephants is usually good humored, but Elmer falsely interprets when the elephants “sometimes [...] joked with him” (McKee) but do not actually mean to hurt him. Rather, they appreciate his unique pattern and color. Although also Elmer “sometimes joked with the other elephants” (McKee), he directly attributes their laughter to his differences, thinking, “[n]o wonder they laugh at me” (McKee).

The decision to choose that particular name for the main character has its roots in linguistic parallels between the species elephant and the name Elmer itself, denoting a commonly used stylistic device in literary studies. McKee’s choice represents a fine example of alliteration (Wallwork np). Thereby, the repetition of the first sound(s) of the subsequent word(s) create(s) an auditory effect, which appeals to the reader and hence makes the story more memorable (Baldick 6). Children familiar with Elmer likely rapidly associate an elephant with the hero in the picturebook.

McKee ascribes humanlike behavior to the protagonist, which is a successful tool for the creation of literature. “When an animal in a children’s story is a believable human being, the **anthropomorphism** creates fantasy” (Lukens 49, original emphasis). This process assists the reader in identifying with or relating to the character and sparks imagination to see things from the perspective of the character, in this case, Elmer. He experiences feelings of joy, pleasure or excitement and incorporates the role of the entertainer among the herd of elephants. “It was Elmer who kept the elephants happy” and “if there was even

a little smile, it was usually Elmer who started it” (McKee). Throughout the entire picturebook, the illustrations depict Elmer in a seemingly positive mood, deriving from his friendly facial expressions. As is often the case, however, appearances can be deceptive. His dazzling skin prompts the feeling of being the black sheep of the herd, making him want to blend in. Elmer’s patchwork runs through the story like a common thread and thus forms a recurring motif, a central idea, which, through constant reiteration, conveys meaning and greatly supports the storyline (Cuddon, “Motif.” 558).

Referring back to the example of Marjorie the cow, who aims at being different and recognizable at all cost, we face the complete opposite in the case of Elmer. Other than Marjorie, he desperately tries to get rid of his uncommon patchwork skin and is absolutely “tired of being different” (McKee), leading to the need for a renewed reflection on the dimensions and implications of exclusion. By “covering himself with berry juice until there wasn’t a sign of any yellow, or orange, or red, or pink, or purple, or blue, or green, or black, or white” (McKee) anymore, Elmer consciously intends to dispose of any of his self-defined exclusion markers. Despite a primary feeling of relief to be able to join the others without being seen, “[a]fter a while Elmer felt that something was wrong” (McKee). In contrast to Andi Cutbill’s *The Cow That Laid an Egg*, in *Elmer*, McKee presents a form of self-exclusion, with a different purpose from the perspective of the respective protagonist. Though unintentional, Elmer excludes himself by failing to be acknowledged as Elmer by the others. Thus, he erred in thinking that he should have changed in the first place. After the rain “[t]he other elephants are happy to have the fun-loving, brightly coloured elephant back” (Jeffries np). Only towards the end does he learn to understand that he is special either way and that his patchwork adds to or even makes up his individuality, for which the other elephants appreciate and like him. They even consider his undertaking “the biggest laugh of all” (McKee).

Elmer’s humor exemplifies a special attribute of distinction and a marker of his personal identity, as he is the only funny elephant among the herd. His talent becomes of major interest especially during the time when the protagonist is grey, whereby laughter is the sole distinguishing feature that characterizes

Elmer and enables the remaining elephants to recognize him despite his disguise. “‘Elmer,’ they said, ‘It must be Elmer’”, when they see their friend “helpless with laughter” (McKee).

Elmer’s situation provides evidence of how unnecessary, if not impossible, it is for individuals to jump through hoops, since an insincere performance cannot last long. The elephants also remark, “‘It didn’t take you long to show your true colours’” (McKee). This comment is significant for several reasons: Firstly and most apparently, reference is made to the rainbow-colored skin of Elmer, as his attempt to hide his true colors and take on normal elephant color is not successful. Secondly, despite the specific meaning of Elmer’s patchwork in that particular context, the idiom *to show one’s true colors* generally expresses exactly what Elmer tries to prevent. In other words, in this idiom the colors are metaphorical and represent the deeper layers of someone’s actual identity that they tried concealing but eventually revealed. One can deduce an either positive or negative connotation from this saying. Considering the example of Elmer and the way he shows his colorful skin, I would suggest an overall positive evaluation, as there was no bad intention involved, despite a different outcome than what he planned. In most cases, this idiomatic expression is usually negatively connoted, because it is typically used after an individual was deceptive about his or her real character traits. Such behavior is regularly found in people’s everyday lives, but diverse literary genres and the media commonly depict transformations in characters in order to create effective material and develop characters in a certain way. The media gives rise to a third and final interpretation of the pivotal sentence taken from *Elmer*. The singer and songwriter Cyndi Lauper released the song *True Colors* in 1986, three years prior to the publication of *Elmer*. The lyrics ideally suit the analysis of the picturebook at hand and especially the lines of the chorus seemingly go hand in hand with McKee’s message to the reader:

And I'll see your true colors
 Shining through
 I see your true colors
 And that's why I love you
 So don't be afraid to let them show
 Your true colors
 True colors are beautiful
 Like a rainbow (Metrolyrics np)

In the chorus, the lyrical I is conscious about probable difficulties to be who one really is but at the same time appeals to the addressee and encourages that individual to show his or her true colors, for which he or she is loved. Being true to oneself and accepting one's individuality is praised in the song. Converting this message to the story of Elmer, the protagonist, too, is loved for his true colors. A metaphorical interpretation suggests that the elephants love Elmer for who he really is. It is the inner values that outweigh the visual appearance. As has been pointed out, cleverly chosen words can have a remarkable effect. Taking the three dimensions into account, it is not farfetched to claim that with this passage, the author has achieved to convey a powerful message, conceived on a direct as well as on an indirect level. McKee's promotion of revealing one's real character traits highlights the centrality of identity and alterity and encourages accepting the other regardless of any differences.

Elmer's situation symbolizes a compelling case of an identity crisis, manifested in him, being uncomfortable and frustrated with his multicolored patchwork skin. This ties in well with the aforementioned concept of the *moi-peau* elaborated by Piaget (see chapter 2.1.), whereby the skin forms a connection between one's inner self and the outside world. As Elmer faces difficulties in accepting his skin, one could speak of a missing link between himself and the others. He needs to identify with his actual skin to become truly happy and stop his inner criticism. After an eventual acceptance of himself, Elmer's *moi-peau* / *soi-peau* has been fully restored and he has straightened things out with himself.

Each of the grey elephants in the story is distinguished by a category of difference, mostly referring to their physicality. Interestingly, gender is not mentioned, except for Elmer, whose name clearly labels him as male. Further, not only does he have a masculine name, but he is actually the only one with a name after all. As has been outlined, there is a strong connection to the power of names in the context of identity. The story of Elmer also exemplifies the importance of names in the process of identity negotiation. "As he walked through the jungle, Elmer met other animals. They always said: 'Good morning, Elmer'" (McKee). By calling him by his name, they recognize Elmer as Elmer. After having covered himself with the grey berry juice, he returns home,

encounters the same animals again, but experiences a different reaction. They say, “Good morning, elephant” (McKee). Elmer feels content with his newly adopted role and is eager to preserve his status of anonymity. With the new name, he has simultaneously taken on a new identity. This proves the possibility of a fragmentation of identities, in the sense that an individual can have several identities. In trying to obscure any markers of exclusion, he aimed at belonging to his monochromatic friends. “When he had finished, Elmer looked like any other elephant” (McKee) and, at least for a while, disappears completely.

Elmer’s status of becoming the other triggers the discussion of the twin concept of identity, namely alterity. The key sentence in the book that refers to the process of othering is “Elmer was different” (McKee). The author presents a special form of alterity in the book, due to the switched roles regarding the hegemonic group. Most commonly, the other is determined by a highlighting of differences performed by the majority in the more dominant position. Yet, in this example, it is Elmer himself, who repeatedly emphasizes that he is visually distinguishable from the others, until he understands that his attempt to fit in failed. This adds to an interesting and new perspective on the perception of alterity. Elmer is not perceived as the other among the herd of grey elephants, but rather purposefully abandons his role as the beloved multicolored animal.

Another relevant point in alterity studies concerns the investigation of what is perceived as normal. If the grey skin color of the majority of elephants is declared to be the yard stick that determines what accounts as the norm, then Elmer surely deviates from the average. At the moment when “the rain cloud burst” (McKee), the reader is confronted with a passage conveying another crucial message. “The elephants still laughed as Elmer was washed back to normal” (McKee). The last word is to be counted as the decisive term in this sentence. It is the rainbow-colored patchwork that marks Elmer normal and grants him his deserved place in the herd. The norm changes, depending on the perspective. At the beginning, Elmer does not feel normal but rather feels like the other. From the perspective of the grey elephants, however, his colorful

skin symbolizes the norm, giving the impression as if Elmer was a norm category all by himself.

The motif of the patchwork invites the reader to revisit the importance of peritextual features in picturebooks. *Elmer* features “endpapers with an illustration that is the same on the front and back endpapers” (Sipe and McGuire 62). Along with its recurring function in the course of the story, the patchwork is displayed on the front as well as on the back endpaper, both inside and outside. Also the front cover shows Elmer with his patchwork skin and thus, the importance is highlighted twice. On the cover page, Elmer blends in with the patchwork of the background. As no contrasting grey elephants are shown, he is not the other on the title page.

The success of the book rests to a great extent on the colorful presentation of the illustrations, especially with the depiction of Elmer. After the reader has become acquainted with Elmer, most of the colors of his patchwork are either obviously or more indirectly represented on the majority of pages in diverse shapes or forms. This refers to any objects illustrated, such as trees, bushes, or plants along with the other animals living in the jungle. Trees featuring blue leaves with colorful birds on their branches, or a mixture of blue, pink and purple raindrops symbolize Elmer’s special and colorful nature.

When flipping through the total number of 32 pages, it does not take long to realize another noteworthy visual effect in *Elmer*, which is a constant change of background colors on each single page. Given the vital significance of colors outlined so far, the continuous alternation in background colors adds another level of dynamics to the book. The use of various colors has a direct impact on the reader and evokes certain feelings. Apart from the effect on the audience, colors can, moreover, represent the emotional state of the characters within the story. Thus, if employed effectively, the choice of a specific color in a particular situation can send signals to reveal the current mood (Lukens 45). With that in mind, I would like to refer to the scene in which Elmer walks through the jungle, with his goal of blending in with the other elephants. When passing the jungle animals, all eyes are on the multicolored elephant. He, however, is full of hope

not to be as conspicuous anymore after the realization of his plan. On this double spread, the most dominant color is green. Hues of green dominate the picture from the ground up to the sky. A possible association with green is the feeling of hope (Becker, "Green." 133) which ideally suits the visual representation of Elmer's mood at that stage in the story. The following two pages depict Elmer shaking the bush with "elephant-coloured berries" (McKee) with considerable exertion. The activeness and energy exposed in that scene is symbolized with the predominance of hues of red and orange.

As colors have to be seen as cultural or personal conventions and cannot be granted universal account, the interpretations predominantly represent an individual approach. Nonetheless, theory on color codes exists, substantiating my preceding elucidation. According to Udo Becker, the positive connotation of green with hope relates to a medieval custom of depicting the cross of Jesus Christ in green "as an expression of hope for humanity's return to Eden" ("Green." 133). In contrast to that, a Chinese readership would rather see green in relation to "lightning and thunder" ("Green." 133). Red can be interpreted either positively as the "color of life, of love [...] [or] enthusiastic passion" or negatively as "color of war [...] [or] hate" (Becker, "Red." 246). Especially the latter positive association with red might symbolize Elmer's passionate wish to blend in. The combination of green and red in subsequent order might allude to green often being "the antagonist of red" ("Green." 133).

The liveliness in Elmer's world conveyed through the use of a wide range of colors, however, is not constantly present in the story. During the time Elmer is grey, there is little to barely any movement in the pictures and the reader envisions the elephants as serious and mostly "standing absolutely still" (McKee). In those pages, only a very limited number of colors can be detected. Elmer turns into a grey elephant, and with that, also the colorful world seems to disappear in the pictures. Beforehand, the illustrations are noticeably more colorful, often displaying all nine colors of Elmer's patchwork. As soon as "Elmer rejoined the other elephants" (McKee) in disguise, however, a domination of the color grey can be observed. The omission of any other colorful animals or plants reduces the depiction to the grey herd exclusively. Referring to the use of

colors in the foreground only, McKee includes a total of four double spread pages in which monochromaticity is predominant, three of which are after Elmer's transformation. In addition, the very first double spread also features the monochrome herd of elephants, only without Elmer. The rain is pivotal in the change to the eventual dominance of colors, and the very last two pages, again, display all of Elmer's patchwork colors.

After the analysis of green and red, questioning the meaning of grey seems appropriate, given its significance in the story. "Grey consists of equal proportions of BLACK and WHITE" (Becker, "Grey." 133, original emphasis). Black and white often symbolize an end of a spectrum, whereas grey is in-between. Grey possibly also signifies neutrality as opposed to the black and white binary. Especially in the context of alterity, the latter two colors denote something rigid and trigger an immediate association with the term zebra thinking, meaning to only believe in one of two clearly separable and no intermediate options. In order to prevent any negative consequences of othering, moving beyond predetermined associations, tolerating and accepting differences is of absolute essence. In regards to Elmer's story, I would claim that the elephant color grey could underline the attitude of the elephants towards alterity. They are open-minded, do not categorize and fully accept Elmer. Thus, the part-time domination of grey in the story does not just have a sad or pessimistic connotation, but rather, it can also be interpreted as a positive approach towards Elmer.

Apart from the use of colors, the arrangement of characters and objects in the images are of vital importance. "In visual images, the positioning, size and composition of the contents of an image affect the meanings conveyed" (Serafini 11). All three components that Frank Serafini considers essential in reading the visual, determine the analysis of the first two double pages. Initially, McKee introduces the herd of twenty grey elephants. They are distinguishable, yet convey the impression of being a collective whole, due to their skin color and the direction they face. More specifically, all of the grey colored elephants look to the left. Supported by the sentence, "All, that is, except Elmer" (McKee) the moment of page turning comes into play and the reader expects the

presentation of the protagonist. The following pages meet a reader's expectation of seeing a character completely different to the previously presented group. The illustration depicts Elmer with his wide array of vibrant colors, thereby making his skin color a marker of difference. In contrast to the others, however, he is also looking to the right. Despite them all being of the same species, their divergence is visually represented, not solely through the differences in skin color, but also through an underlying separation in viewing directions. As their glances do not meet, they convey the message of going separate ways. In terms of size and positioning of the elephants, the author dedicates two entire pages to just Elmer, and thus ascribes him the most important role. No other elephant displays a strong difference to its peers, all spread independently over the first double page.

The subsequent scene supports the assumption that Elmer is loved and accepted, despite being different. "When considering an image with participants doing something, it is necessary to begin by considering who is doing what to whom or what object" (Serafini 13). Lifting Elmer and celebrating him as their king of jokes, characterizes the grey elephants as warmhearted friends. In this, Elmer has points of contact to every elephant in the herd, creating at least a visual sense of belonging. True feelings of cohesion are actually presented and experienced only at the ending and the celebration of Elmer's Day. This is a nice link to the previously mentioned interpretation of Lauper's chorus. Despite their disguise on Elmer's Day, all the elephants are recognized for their real character traits. Thus, the book ends with a mutual revelation of the elephants' true colors.

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis and value the picturebook as a coherent whole, an investigation of the verbal aspects in *Elmer* must follow. Like in most picturebooks, the number of words is rather limited. "In any text, the starting point for exploring meanings beyond the literal is to look closely at how meanings are constructed. With writing this may mean looking at aspects of style, such as vocabulary choices and sentence structure" (Goodwin 155). Incorporating certain rhetorical figures to embellish a text is a highly acknowledged method in literature. As has been stated, books for children

regularly feature stylistic devices that vastly contribute to the effects of reading them to or with children. The stylistic relationship between Elmer and elephant has already been declared to be an alliteration. McKee introduces one further example of alliteration as he describes the herd as “the serious, silent, still, standing elephants”. Moving beyond the sound level towards an analysis of the word level, the scene where Elmer catches “hold of the bush” (McKee) displays a similar literary device, named anaphora (Cuddon, “Anaphora.” 40). Thereby, the words “a large bush” (McKee) are repeated three times in direct sequence, to emphasize its centrality as it should be the key to Elmer’s new life. Elmer’s exclamation “Booo!” (McKee) not only signifies a twist in the story, as it led the other elephants to recognize him, but it also exemplifies an auditory effect. Such a figure of speech is called onomatopoeia, whereby a specific sound is phonetically imitated, denoting its original source (Cuddon, “Onomatopoeia.” 656).

In summation, *Elmer* teaches us important lessons for life and conveys the message that there is no need to put on a mask and try to be someone else. It is instead more important to appreciate oneself as well as the other.

5.2. Something Else



Fig. 3: Something Else Cover

Illustration taken from Riddell, cover page

The ensuing analysis centers around the main character named Something Else, a little blue creature, who “just wants to find somewhere to belong” (Cave). Due to his differences, he is rejected by the others and denied a place in their group. His visual appearance cannot be narrowed down to either a human being or a particular animal, although he features several characteristics of both, such as ten fingers, paws and a hairy body resembling fur. Something Else desperately wishes to blend in and tries almost everything to please the others. He struggles in adapting to their language, games and eating habits but they do not appreciate his relentless efforts and maintain their opinion that he does not belong because

he is something else. The sudden appearance of Something, a similarly small orange creature at Something Else's home, initiates an unexpected twist in the story. Something Else initially does not want the uninvited guest to stay. His skepticism turns out to have its roots in Something being different to him. Something helps Something Else overcome his initial mistrust and makes him conclude that it is okay to be different. "From then on, Something Else had Something to be friends with" (Cave). At the very end, Something Else has definitely achieved a change of mind, as both invite a little boy to stay with them, despite him being completely different to them as well.

What certainly strikes attention is the choice of names for the two main characters. The name Something Else highlights the creature's lack of similarities to the others, the group of animals of which he wishes to become a fully accepted member. From just reading the lines on the first page the audience cannot be certain about the protagonist's gender. As Something Else is constantly referred to with the pronoun he, his male identity is clearly revealed on a textual level. The author refers to Something only as it or the creature, leaving its gender to the reader's imagination. The partial overlap in names might hint at the importance to value the similarities instead of highlighting the differences. Both are, however, the only two characters that even have a name.

Similar to Something Else, Something is also no person or specific animal, which is even verbalized in the story through the line "It stuck out a paw, or maybe a flipper" (Cave). The insecurity in precisely labeling the creature's limb underlines the difficulty of an exact categorization. A small trunk, long hair and an orange fur advance this assumption. Some readers might feel the urge to clearly specify the main characters and see them as members of a particular species. This book, however, is another fine example that perfectly illustrates how unnecessary it is to categorize everything, and encourages the overcoming of pigeonholing. The author presents Something Else and Something as little creatures that convince in their behavior and characteristics, downplaying the impossibility of accurately defining their identity as either human or animal, and

certainly emphasizing the comprehension of the underlying concept, namely the acceptance of differences.

The marginalization of Something Else emphasizes the theme of alterity. The urge lies in answering one of the guiding question: who are the others? From the perspective of the animals in the story, Something Else appears as the other with the negative connotation as the outsider. Given the viewpoint of Something Else, however, the others are superior and act as a collective whole, although they are actually all different as well. They can be further subdivided into groups of distinct animal species including giraffes, rabbits and birds. Strictly speaking, they do not appear visually homogenous, but rather only Something Else sees them as a unified group. An apparent change in power relations happens with the introduction of Something, a new other in Something Else's view. He allows himself to categorize Something as the other due to its differences and consequently slips into the role of the more powerful agent. The very end is proof of Something Else having successfully managed to accept differences, as "they moved right up and made room for" a little boy "that really WAS weird-looking". "[T]hey didn't say he wasn't like them and he didn't belong there" and fully integrate the new other (Cave, original emphasis).

At this point it is once more important to highlight the importance of the perspective in the discussion about alterity. It is noteworthy that the author introduces a realistic character, a little human being as the other and weird-looking. From the perspective of a human reader, no visual peculiarities can be detected about the boy, as he would be described as a normal male child. The little creatures, however, are able to describe several differences to themselves, which emphasizes the fact that the perception of otherness is determined by the viewpoint of individuals. This discussion reveals that, in general, the reader commonly regards humans as the norm, instead of animals or any other creatures. It could also be interpreted as a bridge between the abstractness in the picturebook and the real world in order for the child to realize the message that lies behind.

The audience accompanies Something Else in his attempt at coming to terms with the consequences of alterity in a twofold way. On the one hand, he himself falls victim to othering. Straight from the beginning there is no doubt in Something Else being the odd one out. Something Else is conscious about his position in the group. “He knew that was what he was because everyone said so” (Cave). Trying hard in changing his behavior to perform like the others, his adaption process apparently fails, exposed through the repeated key utterance “Sorry. You’re not like us. You’re something else. You don’t belong” (Cave). Being continually dismissed by the others, he cuts himself off from the hegemonic group. In this relationship, Something Else is clearly in the inferior position. On the other hand, the way he encounters Something remarkably depicts Something Else as the active performer of biased thinking. He does not approve its differences and declines Something’s handshake as a sign of friendship.

The dual approach towards alterity in the picturebook calls for a reflection on the critical term norm in this context. Something Else is rejected by the others due to his different behavior and actions as “[h]e didn’t see the things they saw” (Cave). Interestingly, his physical peculiarities are never verbalized as a decisive factor for the failure of approval. Thus, his language or food are the markers of difference and – in the eyes of the dominant group – define the norm. Something’s unforeseen presence not only twists the storyline, but also concurrently adds to the analysis of what is perceived as normal. Something Else confronts the foreigner with harsh words. “You’re not like me. In fact, you’re not like anything I’ve ever seen. I’m sorry, but you’re definitely not MY sort of something else” (Cave, original emphasis). With these words, Something Else declares himself to be a norm category of his own. Something, however, suggests, “You’re something else, and I’M ONE TOO!” (Cave, original emphasis). By placing himself on the same level with Something Else, Something enhances the newly defined norm category, something else. Only after a while does this induce Something Else to a change of thinking and he understands, “You’re not like me, BUT I DON’T MIND” (Cave, original emphasis). From then on, he accepts Something and asks him to stay and even

undertakes the same procedure once more with the full acceptance of the little boy.

In view of the multifacetedness of picturebooks, *Something Else* perfectly exemplifies how the verbal and the visual impact the conception of the story. Regarding the verbal, the manifold plays of words chiefly contribute in the conveyance of otherness, such as, “It reminded Something Else of something” or “Something was standing on the doorstep” (Cave). What is more, most of the key passages that are supposed to underline the promotion of valuating differences are printed in capital letters. Besides the notable success of the written part, the pictorial level not only provides a pleasure for the eye, but likewise expresses substantial information to better comprehend the relevance of alterity.

Pictures naturally have a superior ability to convey the spatial position of the character, and especially the mutual spatial relationship of two or more characters, which often reveals their psychological relationship and relative status. (Nikolajeva and Scott 83)

In his images, Chris Riddell convincingly illustrates the power relations between the agents. What remarkably stands out is the juxtaposition of Something Else and the groups of animals. The illustrator cunningly portrays Something Else's exclusion by often creating two different, clearly separable spatial positions. In one specific scene, Something Else is not allowed to share the same space with the others. While he has to eat his “packed lunches” (Cave) in the sun all by himself, the others enjoy their meal in the shade, demonstrating an unmistakable border. Throughout the story, the collective of animals is always positioned as a large dominant crowd, whereas Something Else acts all alone. According to the all-against-one principle, in several scenes, the others fixedly look down on Something Else. This disparity is additionally aggravated through their different sizes. With Something Else, on the one hand, and the giraffes, on the other hand, two extremes meet in terms of height. In contrast, Something Else and Something are literally on eye level, especially after Something Else has learned to appreciate his new friend.

A close examination reveals the mirror in Something Else's home as a major symbol that runs through the whole book. At the very beginning, the reader

meets a desperate Something Else looking into the mirror and learns that he is not loved by the others. Moreover, Something Else's initial rejection of Something is also captivatingly shown with the help of the mirror, creating an interesting visual effect. In that particular scene, the left part of the double spread shows Something sadly-faced staring into the mirror whereas he is surrounded by darkness. The right page, however, not only reflects Something's facial expression. Here, interestingly, the real occurrences, the setting and hence also Something Else's skepticism can be perceived exclusively in the mirror. In a third scene, it is the little blue creature once more that worriedly looks into the mirror, after Something's departure. The mirror as a symbol has a longstanding tradition in literature. "The symbolism of mirrors depends not only on what things cause the reflection [...] but also on what one sees in them – oneself, the truth, the ideal, illusion" (Ferber 124). Common to all three situations, Something Else and Something always see themselves. Besides, it mirrors the harsh truth, meaning that both have to cope with their role as the odd one out. First, Something Else is rejected by the animals and then, in turn does not accept Something. With regard to overcoming othering, the most crucial part of the story is the scene thereafter. Michael Ferber suggests that "we might profit from watching others as potential mirrors" (124). By looking into the mirror, Something Else recognized something familiar about the situation and his own facial expression. Only after a while did he realize the effects of his stigmatizing behavior, which resembled exactly those of the animals. Thus, the mirror assisted Something Else in the learning process to overcome othering and accept differences of any kind.

As theory proposes, including the endpapers, *Something Else* features exactly 32 pages. Still, the relatively limited number of words in picturebooks generally aggravates a detailed description of the setting. The majority of knowledge about the surroundings of characters is mostly deduced through the images. In *Something Else*, the reader learns from the narrative about him living "[o]n a windy hill" (Cave). Any further information about his environment and home is exclusively demonstrated in the pictures. In this, a close introspection reveals more detailed results. Overall, the story takes place in two major settings, Something Else's home and somewhere outside. The outdoor scenes are

always shown in combination with the animals. Although an exact location cannot be specified, the reader observes a verdant surrounding with mountains, large trees and flowers. In turn, Something Else's environment seems rather remote and less colorful. As he lives alone on the top of a hill, "with nothing to be friends with" (Cave), his domicile is rather exposed, contributing to his role as an outsider. His room, however, is more or less neatly furnished and creates a comfortable atmosphere.

Theory about the visuals in picturebooks has outlined the importance of colors in combination with symbols and objects. The color-coding in this book reveals a dominance of yellow and blue. Fascinatingly, anything that surrounds Something Else's home, the hill, the plants, the street and even the house is displayed in the same hue of blue as himself. This makes his loneliness even more special. Nonetheless, the clothes, the skin or the feathers of the animals likewise demonstrate the color blue, perhaps hinting towards the desire of mutual tolerance. A huge yellow armchair takes up a central space in his room and fulfills the crucial role of a so-called connector between the characters. The bond between the characters is visually represented through the sewed-on dotted, striped, checked patterns of the chair. The same motifs can be rediscovered on the clothes of the animals, as well as on the little boy at the end. Every character taking a seat on the armchair has been in the position of the other, for example Something Else, Something and the boy.

In relation to that, the double spread with Something entering Something Else's room features another twist, this time referring to the use of colors. Before the encounter with Something, the design of the curtain in his room looks just like the scarfs of the rabbits, more precisely a pattern of yellow with red dots. After the creature has appeared, a less bright light lets the dots resemble more the color of Something, namely orange. Generally, these two pages show a dominance of blue and orange, representing the character's colors and alluding to the special bond they then share.

Taking all the insights together, Cave has skillfully created a warmhearted story around the serious issue of alterity. The interplay of the verbal and the visual,

with the support of successful color-codes and meaningful symbols enable the reader to relate to the characters and understand the concept of othering. Overall, the book shows that being different is valuable as there is always something else that people share with each other.

5.3. It's Okay to Be Different



Fig. 4: It's Okay to Be Different Cover

Illustration taken from Parr, cover page

In his dual function as author and illustrator, Parr has created a vividly colored picturebook. The promising title already gives away the major social lesson the book teaches. Although it does not feature a storyline in the conventional sense, *It's Okay to Be Different* displays a clear structure. Every single page that resembles a hand-drawn image by a child introduces a new issue that might initiate a stigmatization of a particular group and cause othering, but likewise advocates to accept differences by ending the recurring phrase "It's okay to" differently. The

acting agents are either humans, animals or objects that are ascribed particular characteristics, conditions, feelings or physical attributes that make them special and highlight their uniqueness. To demonstrate the preciousness of diversity, there is no pattern concerning which differences are explained through humans and which through animals or objects.

With regard to possible subdivisions of the genre of picturebooks, Parr's contribution is most likely to fall into the category of "concept books [...] that define a single thing or idea" (Hillmann 94). Depending on the interpretation, each picturebook can implicate more than one single idea. In *IOTBD*, one obvious central notion is the acceptance of differences. Hence, I will stick to this classification for the rest of the paper. Parr's picturebook sets out to teach viewers the importance of tolerance towards minority groups, particular (love) relationships or specific emotions. Without sophisticated and critical reflection, any of the images presented might trigger biased thinking whereby differences would occupy the foreground.

To be able to see differences to something or someone, a source of comparison is needed. This often goes hand in hand with the existence of a common yard stick, also regularly perceived as the norm. On the one hand, the terms differences and norm have an antonymic relationship, on the other hand, they lie closely together, as something or someone can only be labeled abnormal with the existence of differences. Without doubt, the toleration, appreciation and acceptance of differences deviating from the norm are the main concerns of this picturebook. As common to the majority of books of this genre, the images depict events on a meta level that do not plainly resemble reality for the effect of distancing. Given the abstractness as well as the individuality of every page within the frame of this picturebook, the establishment of a norm is essentially impossible. Any interpretation is entirely up to the audience's view, with every reader approaching such a book with a particular world knowledge and varied experiences. The following examples are meant to exemplify the preceding theoretical remarks. Parr's images depict various scenarios that I grouped into four different major categories, namely, controversial social issues, physical differences, feelings and emotions and the valuation of oneself. Each page stimulates further reflection and discussion.

To begin with, socially controversial topics often trigger diverging reactions and lead to disagreement among activists of different viewpoints. Examples would be: family constructions, migration and racial issues.

Contrary to the traditional understanding of a married, mixed-gendered couple having children, family constellations, such as a patchwork family are becoming more and more common. A scenario in the book suggests that "[i]t's okay to be adopted" (Parr). While it is absolutely clear that the author aims at promoting the toleration of being raised by other adults than the birth parents, his choice of characters designates an interesting point of analysis. At first glance, one might only see a bigger animal, reminiscent of a kangaroo, as it carries a smaller one of a different species, resembling a dog, in its pouch. On closer inspection, apart from the pouch, the supposed kangaroo features no similarities with the body of a conventional one. It could even be a bear or a dog. This would

underline the central message that mutual love is the most important bond parents and children can share, which is easier to understand for the mostly underage readers due to the abstractness.

A myriad of reasons have led or even forced people to leave their native land over centuries, meaning that migration is not just a phenomenon of current affairs. As the move from one country to another does not always run smoothly, there is often much talk of foreign politics on which people take different viewpoints. Due to the omnipresence of this issue, Parr's picturebook symbolizes a valuable contribution to the literary market that addresses potential problematic areas. He endorses that "[i]t's okay to come from a different place" (Parr). The accompanying picture portrays a little green alien from outer space that utters "jbxxz rfyxtqrkk!" (Parr). A plain interpretation of that picture would mean that Parr welcomes all aliens on earth. Considering its abstractness, however, it becomes clear that he generally promotes a foreigner-friendly attitude. With the addition of the speech bubble the writer concurrently addresses the accompanying language barriers in such contexts that aggravate the situation and need to be overcome.

Foreigners from a different ethical background are often stigmatized, not only due to their lack of sufficient language skills, but also often because of their skin color. This picturebook contributes to make it clear that "[i]t's okay to be a different color" (Parr). The portrayal of two differently colored zebras, a black and white one next to a multi-colored one, invites readers to delve deeper into the choice of colors for the animals. A glance into history proves the longstanding problematic nature of racial issues and the power of the hegemonic group of whites suppressing the blacks. This stark controversy unfortunately represents a reality that is still valid today. Therefore, the message advocates seeing the bigger picture and is literally a plea to abandon zebra thinking.

Sadly, the classification of people according to their skin color is one of the most frequent and radical forms of categorizing people. On a surface level, such a distinction refers to visual and physical differences. Elaborating on that with a

different focus, *IOTBD* features several pages that allude to the need for accepting physical disabilities or differences. At the outset, the reader only sees a girl wearing glasses, who is accompanied by a dog. It is the world knowledge along with the verbal that enables the audience to interpret more into the image and be considerate of people with reduced mobility. What is more, the book shows a girl with oversized glasses and another girl with “no hair” (Parr) but only wearing a huge big hair bow. Both items denote visual or cosmetic discrepancies that could cause othering. An interesting point of analysis in Parr’s illustrations concerns his way of presentation for certain physical peculiarities. He sometimes portrays animals for their outstanding body parts and highlights their extremities. This refers to the trunk of an elephant to underline that “[i]t’s okay to have a different nose” or the ears of a rabbit to signal that “[i]t’s okay to have BIG ears” (Parr, original emphasis). Such exaggerated drawings of specific body parts of animals reflect the abstractness of this picturebook that ideally enables people to recognize the need for acceptance among humans.

Being very emotional or open about one’s true feelings can put someone in a difficult situation, notably in inappropriate moments. Parr deals with this issue in his book as well and includes some pages that reveal different emotional reactions. One image portrays two fish looking at a fish hook with their eyes and mouth wide open, signifying fear. The accompanying headline reads, “It’s okay to say NO to bad things” (Parr, original emphasis). This situation makes it evident to readers that people often feel the pressure to perform. Especially in public or among a group, feelings of anxiety or weakness might be connotated with failure, leading to a pretended performance that again initiates feelings of discomfort. Such a vicious circle is proof that it is not necessary to jump through hoops. In relation to that, the author presents another image that encourages emotional honesty by stating “It’s okay to talk about your feelings” (Parr). The question on how to deal with emotions is not only very personal but also highly delicate, requiring the individual to act in a way that feels right.

This ties in nicely with another category that deviates from a sole focus on the other, namely the valuation of the self. To develop a balanced self is vital in

order to appreciate one's own identity. Parr's examples encourage the growth of a sense of self by promoting that "[i]t's okay to be proud of yourself". Further examples suggest "to make a wish" and "to do something nice for yourself" (Parr). In the picture accompanying the latter quote, the reader sees a boy holding ten scoops of ice cream. Proposing that "[i]t's okay to do something nice for someone" (Parr) adds in the development of a social consciousness that is equally important for the own self as well as the other.

As shown, a rule of thumb in picturebook theory is that they approximately display 32 pages. *IOTBD* features exactly that amount of pages, although the number of words is clearly limited in this book. However, "[t]he brevity of text in picture books does not eliminate the necessity for some kind of **plot**, some action or tension, the quality most likely to keep us reading" (Lukens 51, original emphasis). Given the possibility to classify the single images into subcategories according to their common theme, the book demonstrates a clear coherence and the structure is easily graspable. Generally, when reading a book, the audience expects an unimpeded reading flow, often provided through the existence of a storyline and the uncertainty about what happens next. In the book at hand, the reader is not confronted with a storyline in the conventional sense. Due to Parr's neatly drawn pictures and wisely introduced issues, the reader craves for turning the page and learning more, a phenomenon that is known as the "drama of page turning" (Bader qtd. in Nikolajeva and Scott 13).

Despite the restriction in words, an analysis of the verbal in *IOTBD* still shows this picturebook to be a nice example of the effectiveness of words, yet not in the conventional sense of a story. Due to the repetitive sentence beginnings, the content is certainly memorable. In the picture with the lion that encourages to show one's true feelings, the animal character utters sounds like "purrr", "roar" or "grr" (Parr). They should not only hint at diverse possible moods, but also signify another example of onomatopoeia stimulating to read the words out loud. Considering this, along with the foreign language of the alien in the speech bubble, the interpretation of the verbal in these cases denotes an interesting phenomenon in terms of the readership. Still illiterate children are not yet able to comprehend either the noises or the haphazard stringing together of

letters. They are dependent on someone reading to them. In order to make meaning of the intended message, these two examples once more accentuate that picturebooks are not exclusively written for little children.

From the range of colors, Parr illustrates his images in yellow, blue, green, red, orange, purple, pink, black and white. The background color changes from page to page and the characters depicted are drawn as colorful as possible, presumably to be kids-friendly. It seems as if the author decided on a random use of colors for the character's clothes, skin or hair to support the individuality, whereby only a few items resemble reality in terms of color, such as white teeth or a white snowman. Every object features a black outline. In spite of a great variety in colors, overall, blue is very dominant and appears in diverse shades on almost every page. This could be reducible to the fact that Parr likes blue the most, which immediately appears when visiting his personal home page (Parr np). Interestingly, if several people, animals or objects are positioned on one page together, they are always somehow connected by an overlap in colors. To illustrate, in the scene that says "It's okay to be Small Medium Large Extra Large" (Parr), the two boys in the middle both wear yellow trousers, whereas the two females on the edges have yellow faces. This may point to the importance to value the similarities rather than highlight the differences.

The in-depth examination of this picturebook demonstrates a focus on identity and alterity, however in a new format. It is not self-evident what is normal in this context, due to the lack of a direct source of comparison within the book. Clearly, the norm in *IOTBD* is outside the book and the images refer implicitly to that norm. It is the reader's schematic knowledge that makes him or her understand that usually, humans have hair or do not "have an invisible friend" (Parr). The only exception is the so-called normal black and white striped zebra in direct comparison with the multicolored one on the same page. This is why the personal approach towards each image influences the perception and interpretation, along with the potential stigmatization of someone or something as the other. Although the abstractness aids in the avoidance of direct identification, ideally, the audience is able to relate to the occurrences depicted and convert what they see into their personal world view. Only then can they

position themselves in relation to others, which is especially vital with regard to the issues addressed in this book.

What is actually most important to learn is that the picturebook aims to encourage readers to overcome the quest for a norm and urgently calls upon the readership to reject prejudices and combat against any form of discrimination. The final page in the book is a personal note from the author that highlights again, “[i]t’s okay to be different. You are special and important just because of being who you are” (Parr). By even signing the book, he once more emphasizes his personal concern about the significance of this message. Considering this, it is not far-fetched to have chosen the same title for my thesis.

5.4. Similarities and Differences in the Sample Selection

In light of all the insights gained from the previous analysis, this part aims at identifying parallels and divergences in terms of how othering is presented in the three picturebooks. As opposed to *IOTBD*, *Elmer* and *Something Else* both feature a storyline. Thereby, several shared characteristics can be deduced in direct comparison.

To briefly recap, the delightful and colorful story of *Elmer* presents a special case in the literary canon of picturebooks with regard to the myriad ways of analyzing identity and alterity. The reader follows Elmer trying to realize his plan of becoming one of the others as he is feeling uneasy. With regard to alterity, interestingly, Elmer is not stigmatized as the odd one out by the dominant group of grey elephants. It is exclusively Elmer himself who does not want to be visually distinguishable any longer. His transformation and the eventual revelation of his true colors assists Elmer in coming to terms with his differences and appreciating himself as valuable.

Cave’s storyline exemplifies a stirring approach towards alterity by creating *Something Else*, an enchanting protagonist who is portrayed as the victim of

othering and clearly put in an inferior position by the group of animals. Despite every effort to blend in, they deny him a place among the group. However, *Something Else* is not only the one on whom othering is performed, but also an active performer. He meets *Something*, another different and little creature, with disapproval at first but gradually learns to value all forms of otherness.

In both cases, the title of the book is also the name of the main character that the story centers around. *Elmer* and *Something Else* are visually distinguishable from the others whom they likewise see as the hegemonic collective whole and instantly wish to blend in. The two storylines, however, diverge in view of the behavior of the others. In *Elmer*, the herd of grey elephants accepts the special elephant with his dazzling skin just the way he is, whereas the animals in *Something Else* reject the blue creature. In spite of every attempt to achieve an equal position among them, they strictly refuse to accept *Something Else* as part of their group as he features not only visual differences, but also, his language and eating habits do not conform to that of the majority. As has been argued, *Something Else* occupies a double function as the one being exposed to the negative consequences of alterity and the one performing othering himself. Accounting for both books, a special occasion in the story initiates a change of thinking and they learn that it is important to accept and value oneself as well as the others for one's or their uniqueness. In McKee's plot it is the sudden burst of the rain clouds that washes away *Elmer's* fake identity. Equally abrupt is the entrance of *Something* at *Something Else's* house that only after some time adds in the little blue creature's rethinking.

Concerning othering, these two books display obvious similarities and differences. Considering the related concept, identity, the analysis yields further interesting results. A deconstruction of the main characters' identities evidently reveals them as male. While it is possible to classify *Elmer* as an elephant despite his visual peculiarities, *Something Else's* species remains unclear. Emphasized by the connotation of his name, the little creature signifies that it is unnecessary to always attempt to categorize everything. In the beginning, *Elmer* and *Something Else* share their dissatisfaction with their identity as they do not feel acknowledged among the others. Remarkably, as soon as

Something is part of the storyline, there is not talk of the animals anymore, in contrast to *Elmer*, who eventually feels a sense of belonging. Taking everything into consideration, the centrality of identity and alterity in these two picturebooks is made explicit through characterization and plot development.

Although there is no explicit plot in *IOTBD*, the title of Parr's book already suggests the significance of alterity. His vibrant picturebook unmistakably conveys the view that any forms of difference must be tolerated, appreciated and accepted, through the course of several scenes that represent potential situations or conventions that often initiate othering. The characteristics or conditions depicted are actually what makes each of the acting characters unique and special. The scenarios address vital underlying themes that can be classified into four major areas, referring to socially controversial issues, physical differences, feelings and emotions as well as the valuation of the self. Due to the recurring sentence starters "it's okay to" the reader learns the strong social lesson the book teaches without difficulty. The seemingly arbitrary use of numerous primary colors in the pictures also supports the highlighting of individuality.

While in *Elmer* and *Something Else*, the reader can oppose the protagonists with the hegemonic group and thereby define the other, this is an impossible undertaking in *IOTBD*. As each picture in Parr's book somehow presents a story in its own, there is a lack of a source of comparison to establish a potential norm. This means that in the books with a storyline, there is always a counterpart within the story that enables a direct and obvious contrast in terms of what is the norm. Parr's concept book relies on the reader's world knowledge as the norms are only implied. As the theory suggested, the existence of norms and the establishment of power relations are closely related. At least in *Elmer* and *Something Else*, the group of others is initially considered superior and loses some of this status only towards the end, when the main characters learn to accept their differences and that of others. Common to all three books is that the authors translate the highly delicate issue of otherness from a meta level onto a level that is easier for young readers to comprehend. The abstractness is

also supported by the implication of anthropomorphism, as any of the non-human agents are ascribed humanlike characteristics and attributes.

Throughout this entire chapter, the initially presented guiding questions Who am I? and Who are the others? again served as a common thread. Remarkably, the close investigation clearly revisited the concepts introduced in the literature review. This, for instance, refers to the notion of individual and collective identity in *Elmer*. Due to his dissatisfaction with his individual character traits, he deeply wants to identify with the grey elephants and thereby experience collective identity. Furthermore, the peculiarity that lies behind the term norm accounts for any of the books likewise and once more highlights the importance of the perspective from which the self or the other is determined. This phenomenon is clearly represented in *Something Else*, who considers the animals as the norm at first but then declares himself a norm category of his own.

Given the obvious differentiation markers in terms of how the two books with a storyline are structured compared to the concept book, they still share a common ground. The thematic emphasis of identity and especially alterity explains their joint analysis in order to answer the research questions of this thesis. Independent of the subgenre of picturebooks, each of the three examples selected features an adequate approach for the transmission of the main topic in their individual composition. In case of a concept book, such as *IOTBD*, the theme rapidly occupies the foreground, whereas stories with a plot are more complex with the existence of diverse characters or settings, adding to the general multifacetedness of picturebooks. Thus, a deconstruction of the central issues takes longer.

Referring back to the term message, I believe that *Elmer*, *Something Else* and *IOTBD* relay a convincing social as well as didactic message. In short, the appreciation of the uniqueness in each individual is of great essence and must be respected. Moreover, it is equally important to convey not to ostracize anyone solely on the grounds of their differences. This, in turn, emphasizes their great potential for a school setting. As English is the language of publication, they would also contribute valuable and authentic material for

language education in secondary schools. Dependent on the preparation and implementation for and in the language classroom, I believe they would be greatly effective. Hence, the following and final chapter sets out to elucidate the subject-didactic part of this paper and puts theory into practice.

6. Putting Theory into Practice: Teaching Picturebooks in the EFL Classroom

As the title heading already suggests, this final chapter sets out to present a practical and hands-on approach to picturebooks in the Austrian AHS EFL classroom with regard to the thematic priority of alterity, and consequently also identity given the inseparability of these concepts. Some theory on the Austrian guidelines for foreign language teaching precedes the presentation a lesson plan with specifically designed activities.

Prior to the implementation of the ideas for an Austrian EFL setting, every teacher has to substantiate any activity in the lesson plan with specific language learning objectives, requiring careful planning. In doing so, they must refer to various official policies in order to fulfill the standards required. First of all, the Austrian school curriculum for the AHS (Lehrplan der AHS-Unter- und Oberstufe), published by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen), depicts clear goals and objectives, divided into three major areas: The first one is occupied with the formulation of the general education objective (Allgemeines Bildungsziel), thus the presentation of the individual educational fields. The second one deals with the general didactic principles (Allgemeine didaktische Grundsätze), outlining among others the requirements for fostering autonomous learning or providing remedial teaching (Förderunterricht). With the introduction of ICL in one of the previous chapters another major point among the general didactic principles has already been addressed. The third and final area concerns everything around the designing of lessons (Schul- und Unterrichtsplanung) (BMBF, Erster Teil / Zweiter Teil / Dritter Teil np).

In regards to the Austrian EFL classroom more specifically, the aims and objectives have undergone great changes since an alteration of the AHS curriculum in 2006. There has been a clear shift in the centralization of core values, suggested by members of the Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum (ÖSZ), observing a move away from content based learning more towards communicative based learning. In fact, this adds importance to the negotiation of meaning. Thus, the process now more commonly outweighs the end result (Brock 348-349). In the conduction of lessons, teachers need to adhere to the principles outlined in a major theoretical foundation, namely the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), published five years prior to the newly formulated Austrian curriculum. In Austria it is referred to as Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen (GERS). The framework depicts four skills that should be weighed equally in the development of foreign language abilities along with the training of communicative competencies: speaking, writing, listening and reading. With regards to the German descriptions, speaking is included with a dual focus: *Zusammenhängend Sprechen* (production) and *An Gesprächen teilnehmen* (interaction). What is more, six different language levels build the basis for teaching and the acquisition of language. While A1 and A2 represent guidelines for beginners, more advanced learners are defined by the proficiency levels B1 and B2, in contrast to speakers of the levels C1 and C2 who are capable of almost flawlessly using the target language (CEFR 23-24). Given all this, there is one superordinate aim, namely to make learning and consequently also teaching more comparable and guarantee cross-border validity.

To reach that aim, given standards are available for any subject and aim at guaranteeing fundamental objectives, so-called *competences* for students. These competences are linked to the respective curricula and serve as an orientation for the teachers, who are obliged to adapt their teaching to prevalent objectives. The German term *Kompetenzen* is defined as “längerfristig verfügbare Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten” (Brock 350). Sustainable learning lays the groundwork for the teaching of any discipline, English as well. Due to the previous existence of CEFR / GERS, however, the invention of standards has

not caused huge changes to the teaching of English, putting this subject in a unique position. Alongside the new Matura⁵, a semi-standardized test, the main standardized testing format is named *E8 standard testing*. Carried out in the eighth year of schooling (pupils aged 13 / 14), it provides evidence on whether these goals have been reached or not.

Der Lehrplan definiert als Zielbereich für die 8. Schulstufe das Niveau A2 des GERS, wobei bei Vorliegen günstiger Lernvoraussetzungen auch bestimmte Ziele des Referenzniveaus B1 in den Bereichen Hören, Lesen und Schreiben erreicht werden können. Dieses Niveau A2 lässt sich durch die Beschreibungen im GERS exakt definieren. (Brock 349)

More concretely, these proficiency levels are reformulated into can-do statements, in order for the students to be able to better relate to them and position themselves adequately. In other words, it is a translation of the standards into learner language. The following paragraph outlines the exact definition of the language proficiency level A2.

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need. (CEFR 24)

The standardized testing format covers all the necessary skills a student of English needs to be acquainted with. The main idea of the E8 is to support those, who do not perform well (enough). The results should serve the means of an orientation tool also for the pupils and reveal the areas in need of improvement. Reflecting critically on this form of testing, one could judge it as a control tool. It forces teachers to teach according to the given principles and to think of measurable achievements. In the constraint to make use of standardized material, they might feel limited in their approach to teaching. The availability of diverse material to be downloaded for free provided by the ÖSZ facilitates the adequate preparation of students. Still, teachers need to overcome the challenge to cover all the language skills equally.

⁵ Matura is the Austrian final exam at the end of the students' secondary education that enables them to attend institutions of higher education, such as university.

Regularly combining as many skills as possible in the lessons is a prerequisite for the teacher to enable students to reach the given standards. In this, teaching is most successful when the whole concept and the whole understanding of language are included in the teaching (Richards and Rodgers 159). Thereby, the application of specific methods and approaches is indispensable. Considering the prescription in the CEFR to extensively train communicative competence, there is an instant call to refer to the most outstanding approach for teaching a foreign language, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Its main principles chiefly imply that learners acquire a language by means of realistic and meaningful communication in the classroom supported by the distribution of authentic material suggesting meaningful tasks (Richards and Rodgers 161). To make sense of what Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers demand, a definition of the pedagogically technical term *task* needs further investigation. David Nunan carries together several interpretations by diverse scholars, but eventually draws his own conclusion, declaring a task “a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language [...] in order to express meaning” (2). Nunan’s conception of a task with the emphasis on a clear focus on meaning rather than form rejects a common misbelief that CLT refers exclusively to speaking. It is necessary to construct tasks by considering the application of specific methods and approaches that comprise as many skills as possible.

The promotion of this communicative form of teaching has more or less superseded the implementation of methods in the language classroom. A dictionary of language teaching describes a method as

a way of teaching a language which is based on systematic principles and procedures, i.e. which is an application of views on how a language is best taught and learned and a particular theory of language and of language learning. (Richards and Schmidt, “Method.” 363)

This means that due to their rather dogmatic and prescriptive characteristics, the roles of the teachers and the learners are clearly specified and inflexible. There is just little scope for interpretation concerning teaching techniques and procedures. In the modern language classroom, methods have been rendered

rather obsolete, as standards are more easily achieved with the help of approaches. Their flexibility provides supplementary opportunities for the teacher. There are no fixed set of prescriptions and techniques, merely suggestions that may be used and adapted to the specific learner needs. Approaches are therefore defined as “the theory, philosophy and principles underlying a particular set of teaching practices” (Richards and Schmidt, “Approach.” 30).

Bearing that in mind, the CLT approach is to be taken as the foundation in Austrian EFL teaching. As a further development of CLT, the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach provides additional ways to reach the learning objectives. Corresponding to CLT, learning takes place through communicative interaction, allowing for or even encouraging trial and error. In contrast to CLT, however, TBLT offers a greater variety of tasks, whereby they are used as the central element in planning a lesson. Usually, tasks are made up around gaps and center either real life or pedagogical situations (Feez qtd. in Richards and Rodgers 224). Analyzing the potentials TBLT offers, learners might easily experience motivation as their role in the classroom is ascribed vital importance and encourages autonomous learning. They can be either “group participant”, “monitor” or “risk-taker and innovator” (Richards and Rodgers 235). The downside, however, is that teachers face great responsibility because they are forced to create meaningful tasks according to specific learner needs. They must be aware of the individual and pay attention not to neglect anyone.

All in all, the communicative classroom is perceived as the ultimate goal to teach, learn and acquire a language. Foreign language learning must be authentic and thus also realistically taught, for which picturebooks serve as a suitable medium. It has been established that they provide opportunity to conduct numerous possible activities enabling teachers to adhere to the CLT requirements. What follows is an implementation of the theoretical insights into a practical application, with the design of a lesson plan and the use of precise examples.

6.1. General Rationale

The following didactic approach puts the theory behind alterity in picturebooks into practice. Targeted at a fourth grade AHS class, a specifically designed lesson plan presents several tasks and activities on how to possibly address identity and alterity in the language classroom. As one single lesson seemed insufficient to be able to cover the most important aspects, I decided to develop materials for a double session. The matrix generally focuses on the familiarization with otherness. Thereby, the implementation of picturebooks is expedient to support the process of raising students' awareness of the importance of accepting differences of others and oneself. The whole lesson plan comprises a total amount of eleven activities. The activities one to seven aim at introducing the main concepts in question to the pupils whereas the activities eight to eleven focus more on the actual approach of alterity through picturebooks in the EFL classroom. Although the lesson plan covers a workload of altogether 100 minutes, the carrying out of two English lessons in immediate sequence is only rarely found in Austrian schools, especially in lower secondary classes. Therefore, the first activities offer enough material for one regular lesson of 50 minutes. After having informed the students about the major concepts and what they (might) imply, this point in the plan lends itself well to a division into two separate lessons. Given the common thread, however, their cohesion is of major significance. If not performed together, it is necessary to conduct both lessons within a narrow time frame in order to reach the learning objectives and guarantee an acquisition of the most essential concepts.

Of course this matrix only presents eleven out of innumerable suggestions for the transmission of identity and alterity with picturebooks in the EFL classroom. As the activities, however, were explicitly planned for the purpose of this paper, the resulting rigid cohesion clearly shows that the lesson plan is relatively inflexible with regard to a potential separation of its individual parts. All the activities build upon each other in order to gradually introduce a complex phenomenon to students, whereby the main focus is laid on the transmission of the content.

Aside from the desired achievements in terms of the content, the pupils must also reach specific additional language goals. The lesson plan depicts a clear priority of training speaking skills, mainly with regard to the first section of activities. In this context, speaking mostly refers to a combination of speaking and listening, hinting at the continuous exchange between the students and the teacher and thereby training the productive and interactive skills *Zusammenhängend Sprechen* and *An Gesprächen teilnehmen*. The teacher acts as a resource person providing the learners with necessary guiding questions to be able to draw their individual consequences and reach the intended outcome. In case of delicate issues such as alterity, the pupils need to be guided through the learning process. This justifies the prevalence of the interaction format class work, notably in the first lesson, during which the focus is on the introduction of the topic and the acquisition of basic knowledge. This particular interaction format continues its frequency in the second part of the lesson plan, with the addition and centralization of one major writing activity.

According to the CEFR, the lessons are designed on the basis of the proficiency level A2. The points below list selected “can-do” descriptors relevant for the activities of the lessons:

Hören:

- Ich kann erkennen, worum es in einfachen Gesprächen geht, wenn mir das Thema vertraut ist und deutlich gesprochen wird (Abuja et al. 27: 1).
- Ich kann Anweisungen, Fragen und Auskünfte in Alltags-, Ausbildungs- oder Berufssituationen im Wesentlichen verstehen (Abuja et al. 27: 5).

Lesen:

- Wenn ich mit einem Thema vertraut bin, kann ich einfache Geschichten, Gedichte und Dialoge im Wesentlichen verstehen, auch wenn ich nicht alle Wörter kenne (Abuja et al. 33: 2).

An Gesprächen teilnehmen:

- Ich kann in einfachen Worten meine Meinung zu einem bestimmten Thema sagen (Abuja et al. 39: 4).
- Ich kann sagen, ob ich mit etwas einverstanden bin oder nicht, und wenn nötig einen anderen Vorschlag machen (Abuja et al. 39: 5).

Zusammenhängend Sprechen:

- Ich kann eine eingeübte, kurze, einfache Präsentation zu einem Thema vortragen, das mir vertraut ist. Ich kann dabei einfache Nachfragen beantworten, wenn ich um Wiederholung bitten kann (Abuja et al. 45: 5).
- Ich kann kurze Ausschnitte aus gelesenen oder gehörten Texten in mehreren einfachen Sätzen wiedergeben (Abuja et al. 45: 7).

Schreiben:

- Ich kann mit Hilfe von vorgegebenen Wörtern, Illustrationen oder Filmmaterial eine kurze, einfache Geschichte schreiben oder Vorgänge und Abläufe beschreiben (Abuja et al. 51: 7).

Comparing the level of proficiency students at an A2 level of English need to have acquired, with the concrete degree of difficulty in the realization of activities, I am conscious of the relatively high requirements. As the plan was specifically tailored to an already familiar class, I relied on the assumption that language skills exceed, at least for a majority of pupils, the average A2 level. Further, because the lesson took place towards the very end of the school year, I expected an already conceivable transition from A2 to B1. Nonetheless, I intended to cover a sophisticated topic in a child-orientated way. An undertaking of minor alterations enables the adaption to a more or less advanced level.

6.2. Lesson Plan: It's Okay to Be Different

The following table illustrates an overview of the activities planned for a double lesson with the intention of approaching alterity with picturebooks in the EFL classroom. To offer a general remark in advance: The quoted PowerPoint

presentation (PPP) (see appendix 1) supports all the activities visually and constantly presents any necessary information for the students. Along with the PPP, any other material is to be looked up in the appendix, as well.

LESSON PLAN					
“It’s Okay to Be Different – Alterity in Picturebooks”					
	Activity	Learning Objectives	Skills	Interaction Format	Material
1	Find the “odd” one out	• Introduction game to deal with othering on a meta level	Speaking	Class Work	PPP
2	A famous “odd” one in literature: Little I-Am-Me	• Demonstrating that books often deal with this issue • Revealing the underlying issue: Quest for finding one’s identity	Speaking	Class Work	PPP + book “Little I-Am-Me”
3	What is identity? What is alterity?	• Clarification of the key terms	Speaking	Class Work	
4	Who are you? What is your individual identity?	• Identifying with personal markers of identity in comparison to that of the classmates • Highlighting of similarities and differences	Writing / Speaking	Individual Work	PPP + sheets of paper

5	Who is Who? “ESC - special”	• Moving beyond the personal level / the class • Highlighting of similarities and differences	Speaking	Class Work	PPP + board
6	“Caption it!”: find a title for the pictures	• Introduction of a new book: “It’s Okay to Be Different” • Discussion of underlying issues	Writing / Speaking	Partner Work / Class Work	Sheets of paper + PPP
7	Brief summary	• Emphasizing the key message	Speaking	Class Work	
8	Quick recap	• Reference to the previous lesson • Review clarification of major terms	Speaking	Class Work	PPP
9	Alterity in picturebooks	• Gradual in-depth analysis of alterity in picturebooks	Speaking / Writing	Class Work / Group Work	PPP / activity sheets
10	Class patchwork	• Creation of a personal class patchwork	Writing	Individual Work	Poster, patchwork
11	Feedback	• Checking comprehension and students’ beliefs	Writing	Individual Work	Feedback sheets

Table 1: Lesson Plan Overview

What follows is a more detailed outline of the individual tasks and activities that makes the link between the theory and the lesson plan explicit.

Activity 1:	Find the “odd” one out
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This activity should not only serve as an ice breaker for the lesson, but also, and more importantly, lead the students to the topic on a meta level. This means that in a list of objects of the same species, students must determine the one that does not belong. They need to defend their answer and name a reasonable motive for their choice. By detecting the particular item that does not belong to the remaining ones, learners need to be made aware of the fact that such undertaking can be encountered in mundane situations as well. Although deeming vegetables, fruits or adjectives as odd is rather harmless, the game still reveals the significance that lies behind the game. Stigmatizing someone as abnormal can imply negative consequences. Accordingly, the performance of othering on human beings should be avoided labeling morally incorrect behavior of which people need to be made aware. One possible medium for raising awareness is literature, as it frequently covers such controversial topics. The reference to literature – and for the purpose of this lesson picturebooks in particular – transitions this activity with the next.

Activity 2:	A famous “odd” one out in literature: <i>Little I-Am-Me</i>
Activity 3:	What is identity? What is alterity?

Assuming that the majority is familiar with the protagonist of Lobe’s picturebook, the students are solely given a picture of the Little I-Am-Me, asked to identify it and give a short overview of the content. Being able to presuppose that the learners are familiar with a relatively old picturebook proves the success of Lobe’s best seller around the world and its deserved status as the most famous picturebook in Austria. With the help of the picture and the guiding questions, the underlying issue should be established. The little creature does not know where it belongs and struggles to find its own identity. The recurring key question of Who am I? symbolizes its challenges in identifying itself. Given the distanced form of addressing by naming the Little I-Am-Me “it”, “you silly little thing” or “you funny little thing” (Lobe), a further discussion of the power of names and the impossibility to ascribe a specific gender to the main character should be initiated. Drawing the children’s attention to the very end of the book

where the story reaches its peak, the central message needs to be discussed. The author wants to tell the reader that the identification with one's own identity is the precondition to be satisfied. Taking this into account, a clarification of the two main technical terms must follow.

Activity 4:	Who are you? What is your individual identity?
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In order to make the abstract more concrete, there is an instant call for the negotiation of the student's own identity. By drawing an individual identity profile, each pupil should reflect critically on his or her own identity and list personal identity markers. An example given by the teacher should aid in the creation process. After a presentation of several profiles, the students should come to a twofold conclusion: While valuing their shared similarities generally outweighs the differences, the latter make each individual unique and special and therefore, need to be dedicated sufficient attention as well. As alterity continues to receive attention in the media, it is indispensable to broaden the student's horizons beyond their classroom, which is what the next activity aims to do.

Activity 5:	Who is Who? "ESC - special"
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With their own identity profile in mind, the aim of this activity is to reemphasize that there are a lot of factors contributing to a person's identity and that they mostly cannot be seen inseparably. Depending on the social relations as well as the social context, identity can change and be renegotiated. Several aspects of identity might become noticeable and challenged in a particular context, especially when they become minority identities. Given the point in time of the lesson and the need for the teacher to take the world into the classroom, the Eurovision Song Contest in spring 2015 was an ideal occasion to teach aspects of identity and alterity. Especially with Vienna being the venue of the sixtieth ESC, there was hardly any opportunity to miss the hype around this event. Due to the ESC, identity and alterity gained fresh prominence.

This task should hence support the pupils in recognizing the significance of identity and alterity to any demographic group, sex or race. By following a triad, meaning an analysis of images in three steps, the learners ought to negotiate the identity of three ESC participants. A first step includes the mere presentation of Paulina Gagarina (Russian participant in 2015) and Måns Zelmerlöw (Swedish participant in 2015). Students are asked whether they know their name and should then mention some obvious identity markers for each of the two. The introduction of Conchita Wurst (Austrian participant in 2014) should reflect a counterpart, especially in regards to gender, and yield the result of the possibility to take on different identities. With the ascription of certain categories or characterizations, such as ESC participant, singer, ESC winner, certain parallels can be drawn, either between all three or two of them. Having established the similarities and differences, the third and final part deals with the question of what impact one's identity has on himself or herself and in terms of behavior with others.

Dealing with such contemporary topics and introducing currently famous people implicates a potential downside of addressing latest world issues in class. As celebrities might easily lose their publicity within a short period of time, the activity would either need adaption for later generations with regard to the people chosen or would have to be completely replaced by a different activity in order to get the learning objective across. Keeping this in mind, the ESC – special ideally suited the date of the practical experience but would need modification in case of a newly conducted lesson.

Activity 6:	“Caption it!”: find a title for the pictures
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Another key message that results from the previous activity once more highlights the need to accept and ideally appreciate differences: It's Okay to Be Different. Before introducing the actual book *IOTBD* to the learners, they should engage in it only from looking at specifically chosen pictures. The visual input should spark the students' imagination and approach the book as well as its message from a different angle. The learners are given four different scenarios on the PPP. Together with their neighbor, they are supposed to devise a

suitable title for the images, keeping in mind the outcomes of the previous activities. The blank space on the PowerPoint slides provides room for the teacher to collect the students' suggestions. What follows is the exposure of the actual verbal component in the book accompanying the visual elements. A discussion of underlying issues (racism, migration, family constellations, etc.) must follow. Referring specifically to the image with the two zebras, the introduction and clarification of the term zebra thinking suits this discussion and should enrich their knowledge of vocabulary.

Activity 7:	Brief summary
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Taking activities one through six together, it is obvious that the students have to deal with and process a tremendous amount of new information. As a result, a first summary of the insights gained is needed, before moving on to a more in-depth level of analysis.

Activity 8:	Quick recap
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Supposing a division of the whole lesson plan into two non-consecutive lessons, this particular activity would act as the ideal bridge between the first and the second part. On the one hand, the picture should activate their schematic knowledge on the previous input on that matter. On the other hand, it should also stimulate a discussion about the possibility to perceive and interpret the message the image conveys in a two- or even manifold way. Depending on the viewpoint along with the individual's experiences, it can evoke an either positive or negative attitude. A fundamental involvement with the image functions as a suitable lead into the process of further deepening identity and alterity. As alterity forms the main concept in the upcoming activities, revisiting its meaning as well as the often implied consequences is essential. The visualization on the PPP should assist students in the enlightening and memorizing process.

Activity 9:	Alterity in picturebooks
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The use of *Elmer* and *Something Else* build the foundation for this activity encompassing several steps. Firstly, the students are only given a few lines from one of the first pages of each book, which outline some relevant information about the protagonist. In order to not reveal their visual appearance, the images are deliberately omitted. Secondly, specific guiding questions on the PPP should initiate a critical reflection on how alterity is featured within both books in advance, followed by a presentation of the main characters. Thirdly, without providing more information on the content, a proceeding writing activity in groups of four enables and encourages creativity (see appendix 2 & 3). Before the revelation of the actual storyline, the different groups are asked to read out their personal stories and thoughts on the characters.

Activity 10:	Class patchwork
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The centrality of Elmer's patchwork as a symbol for othering in the story gives rise to the creation of a personal class patchwork to round off the topic and terminate the sensitive issue with a colorful impression. A definition of the term patchwork in advance is necessary to assure that the pupils are conscious about the task and can make sense of the activity. They are given already prepared colored sheets of paper with the instruction of writing down a personal feature that makes them unique. Collecting the sheets and sticking them onto the poster, finally reveals their personal collage of characteristics that make each class member a special piece of the whole class, just like Elmer's patchwork skin.

Activity 11:	Feedback
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In order to guarantee the effectiveness of the given input, the distribution of a short feedback sheet (see appendix 4) in the end is primarily intended to check comprehension of the key term alterity, but also to gain insight into the students' beliefs about the implementation of picturebooks in the EFL classroom.

6.2.1. Teaching Practice: Insights and Reflective Discussion

As I was given the chance to lead the planned lessons in a real classroom, the ability to contribute a practical perspective adds valuable insights to this thesis. For the sake of completeness, the provision of some background knowledge on the school and the class is still necessary. On the 18th and 22nd June 2015, I worked with 27 pupils (25 girls, 2 boys) in 4a, AHS lower secondary at the BG / BRG Ramsauerstraße, Linz. Their already very high level of English for a lower secondary fourth class facilitated fluid communication. Some of their really sophisticated contributions are worthwhile to be quoted verbatim in the course of this section. To preserve the pupils' anonymity, I will ascribe the respective students a capital letter and will refer to them as *Student A* and *Student B*. Any other direct quotes are gathered from written sources of either the writing activity or the feedback.



Fig. 5: Who is Who - ESC Special

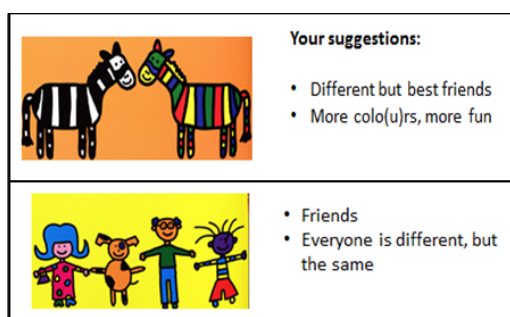


Fig. 6: Caption It! Students' Suggestions

Illustrations taken from Todd Parr

Specifically the ESC activity prompted the teenagers' full attention and passionate contribution. Figure number five depicts the outcomes on the board. The only activity where they lacked creative suggestions concerned the instruction to find an appropriate title for the images in activity number six.

With ideas for only two out of four pictures, the outcome was relatively sparse. Still, Student A shared a nice interpretation of the last, predominantly yellow image (Fig. 6), "Family is not only biology but when you feel that you belong somewhere. So, your friends can also be your family."

At the very end of the first lesson, two students added two general comments on the implementation of picturebooks, nicely rounding off the introductory class, “I would give my children this book [*IOTBD*], because they can learn a lot from it” (Student A). Another pupil replied to that comment in immediate sequence by stating, “But this book is not only for little children, because we can all learn something from it. It is also important for adults” (Student B). Their utterances confirmed my impression of having successfully transferred the intended message(s).

When working on the two picturebooks, their enthusiasm towards the main characters was markedly noticeable. During the writing process, most of the groups really demonstrated a high level of English and allowed their creativity to flourish. Concerning the story of *Something Else*, one of the most outstanding outcomes relates to the students’ invention of names, each denoting a similarity to *Something Else*. The groups named the new little creature: “Someone”, “Someone Else”, “Nobody” and “Anything Else”. One group working on *Elmer* reflected on the notion of othering by writing, “I think he hasn’t got a problem with being different because he looks happy on [sic] the picture.” Despite their lack of knowledge about the real series of events, they placed his confident facial expression over the awareness of Elmer being a different elephant to all the others and referred to a possible positive connotation of alterity.



Fig. 7: Personal Class Patchwork

As approximately half of the class is leaving the school to attend another upper secondary the following school year, creating a personal class patchwork seemed to be a good way to, not only round off the two lessons, but also to evoke a final sense of togetherness among the teenagers. The students greatly approved of the idea, and one learner acknowledged, “I really liked [...] the Patch-Work-sheets [sic]”. The photo depicts the outcome of their self-made patchwork.

The distribution of short feedback sheets aimed at checking students’ comprehension on the major concepts as well as their beliefs about the

suitability of picturebooks in the EFL classroom and their potential restrictions to a certain age group. By the end of the second lesson, the filled in feedback sheets from 24 students were collected due to the absence of 3 pupils. From the total number of 24, two male learners participated in the small anonymous survey. Considering the relatively short time period to reply to the questions given in English, the occurrence of several lexical mistakes needs to be excused.

Due to the overall well-elaborated answers, I am able to summarize that othering seems to have left a mark on the learners. On the evidence of their definitions, the key message has been understood:

- “Alterity is being different, but it doesn’t mean in a negative way. It depends on the situation, it can be positive or negative”
- “It focuses on the others and their differences.”
- “It means to be different from the others – in a positive or negative way”

One pupil even depicted a rather personal approach to defining alterity:

- “alterity is for me to be someone else and to not belong to a crowd.”

Most of the pupils consider the implementation of picturebooks as an added value to the English lesson and defend their opinion by stating, “because they are cool” or “because they are cute and always have a deeper message than it looks like at first.” Only a minority expressed a less enthusiastic attitude towards picturebooks in the English lessons and remarked that “they shouldn’t be used to [sic] often because it gets boring.” or “You can imagine things better, but I don’t like it.” A few articulated a word of warning such as “some pupils could think that it’s a bit childish.”

The overall response to the question on the age limits for the use of picturebooks alluded to a promotion of that genre to all generations and nearly all of them counted themselves among the intended readership. “You are never too old for picture books.” “I think picture books are for everyone, the age doesn’t play a role in this case.” One pupil thought of himself or herself as too old and stated “it depends on the book, but in generall [sic] yes!”

Some general comments emphasized their appreciation for the dominance of free speaking activities, the constant use of the English language while communicating and the visual support of the PPP. Most of them positively assessed the topic and proclaimed their interest in the issue of being different. Such lessons should be seen as undertaking preventative measures and raising teenagers' awareness to the need of tolerating differences. As picturebooks normally transmit messages on a meta level, a possible danger in such a context could be that the students fail to grasp the key points as they cannot filter the concrete from the abstract. Given their reactions in class and the written responses on the feedback sheets, however, the learners in this experience successfully managed to make sense out of the characters and their abstract presentation in the stories.

Despite the success of this double session, caution must be applied as the general applicability is concerned. If the same content had been presented to a different class, or even the same class on another day, the outcomes would / might have gone in a completely different direction. The success of a lesson is always dependent on several contextual features, among others gender relations, the learners' migration and language backgrounds or their schematic knowledge on the issues. Thus, the small sample size of one class is not really representative, although, the circumstances in this case allow me to positively evaluate the lesson and confirm the suitability of approaching alterity through picturebooks in an Austrian EFL setting.

7. Conclusion

This paper offered an account of how alterity can be approached with the help of picturebooks in an Austrian EFL school setting. The overall structure of three major parts enabled me to scrutinize the issue from a theoretical, analytic and practical perspective in order to provide a comprehensive insight.

The literature review demonstrated an inseparability of alterity from identity, strengthened through the fact that both are concepts to describe or even classify people. While identity primarily refers to the self, alterity describes the other. Stigmatizing a person as the other by emphasizing his or her differences, potentially initiates othering and might entail negative consequences. The main concepts in question have relevance to a wide audience, including academics as well as laypeople. Although the notions of the self and the other attract interdisciplinary scholarly attention, this paper mainly adopted a cultural studies focus, as identity and alterity certainly come within this field of research. Due to this omnipresence, addressing their significance in schools is required through distinct prescriptions in Austrian (foreign language) curricula. In this respect, specifically children's literature is regarded as authentic material for the promotion of otherness in the EFL classroom.

Reconsidering the guiding questions Who am I? and Who are the others? with regard to the representation of alterity in picturebooks, this study yields interesting results. The depiction of othering is generally genre independent, in the sense that it is not exclusively limited to one specific subgenre of picturebooks. Nonetheless, the way alterity is approached greatly depends on the composition of the book, the plot, the characters and the relationship between the acting agents. A combination of the theoretical investigation and the analysis of the sample selection proved that books with a storyline are more complex in investigating the major theme than so-called concept books.

Even though the study is based on a relatively small sample size of primary sources, the outcomes provide valuable insights on how alterity is addressed in picturebooks. Contrary to expectation, there is not always a main character that is opposed to an other and finally learns to cope with being different. A deduction of the events rendered made it possible to determine the *I* and the other in *Elmer* and *Something Else*. In direct comparison, *IOTBD* occupies a special status, lacking an actual plot. In this case, it is the series of sequencing, yet incoherent scenes, that convey the centrality of alterity. Although there is a need of specific world knowledge to understand the underlying issues that regularly cause othering, the general idea is transferred easily. Furthermore, the

results obtained showed that alterity is depicted on a meta level in picturebooks for the effect of distancing and avoiding direct identification. This happens through the ascription of anthropomorphic features to animals that thereby become a means to an end in the conveyance of othering.

In spite of the abstractness, picturebooks on alterity are generally created child-friendly, given the complexity that lies behind this concept. Still, the findings enhance a commonly supposed belief of children being the sole audience of this literary genre. The introduction of the phenomenon of cross-reading necessitated a widening of the primary expected audience of children. The composition of the book, the need for specific cognitive and reading skills to be able to fully deduce meaning from the verbal and the visual and picturebooks resembling a sophisticated object of art are three major reasons why older readers, such as young adults, are certainly attracted to this literary genre as well.

The scrutiny of the Austrian AHS curricula clearly revealed a prescription for teachers to incorporate intercultural values among all subjects. Thereby, the occupation with any forms of otherness is an essential aim, given the necessity to move beyond a too-narrow interpretation of the term culture as a nation's customs only. The general didactic aims suggest ICL as a means to respect and accept the world's diversity and accompanying differences to the self that should simultaneously aid in the negotiation of one's own identity. Similarly, language teachers are ought to teach their pupils intercultural competence and intensify the students' knowledge about the diversity of languages around the world.

Drawing parallels between alterity and ICL is justified given their close relationship to cultural studies. Raising the students' awareness of interculturality implies the need for a tolerant and social attitude. Dealing with alterity in the course of ICL concurrently initiates social learning. An EFL classroom setting provides seemingly unlimited opportunities to familiarize learners with intercultural perspectives. This study reported an advantage to

language teachers given the facilitated access to foreign language literature as a way to teach ICL.

The subject-didactic part of this thesis aimed at putting theory into practice and provided concrete examples of possible activities for the teaching of alterity with picturebooks in a school context. In order to understand the perspective of an other, students must gain consciousness of their self, first. This explains the gradual approach towards alterity over the previous introduction of identity. In view of the recent events and public discussions, addressing identity and alterity in relation to the ESC seemed appropriate and proved popular with the learners. As the discussion of viewpoints is of tremendous importance concerning these concepts, the need for oral discussions explains the dominance of speaking activities.

A design of further lesson plans would have gone beyond the scope of the paper. The decision on that particular selection of activities and books was reached as a result of restrictions in time and language level of the target audience. Being limited to an investigation of the AHS curricula only, this study lacks in an analysis of different kinds of Austrian schools to provide more comprehensive results. I would recommend an undertaking of further theoretical and practical research in Austrian Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen to compare and contrast the insights gained from two major educational sectors. Notwithstanding these limitations, this practical experience is definite proof of a successful lesson that greatly substantiates the suitability of picturebooks in Austrian AHS EFL classrooms.

Thus, depending on the choice and preparation, picturebooks can assist effectively in addressing alterity in an EFL classroom and can stimulate a change of thinking. Thereby, the teacher's expertise on this matter is an important precondition, considering the sensitivity of this issue. Recapturing the critical term message in all its intricacy, it is now possible to conclude that all of the findings contribute valuably to the didactic focus of the paper and all of the primary examples chosen support the transmission of the social message: it's okay to be different.

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Abstract

The specific objective of this study was to examine alterity in the medium of picturebooks and question their suitability for the Austrian EFL classroom with regard to approaching this socially sensitive issue. Bearing in mind the ever-increasing internationalism and globalization, there is an urgent need for more tolerance across national borders and the accustomed frame of mind. The promotion of internationalism continually gains in significance for schools and urges teachers to adhere to the requirements anchored as intercultural learning in the Austrian AHS curricula. Unfortunately, the medium of picturebooks for the EFL classroom in secondary schools is still relatively underdeveloped. To fill this gap, this paper offers unique insights into how alterity is addressed in picturebooks and the extent to which this literary genre can aid in the teaching of intercultural learning with teenagers. Finally, an answer is provided to the question of the extent to which dealing with otherness is part of intercultural learning and how is it addressed in the Austrian AHS curricula. Consequently, this study makes a contribution to research on identity and alterity by reviewing their main concepts on the basis of the guiding questions Who am I? and Who are the others? The self and the other also dominate the close reading of a sample selection of picturebooks, including *Elmer*, *Something Else* and *It's Okay to Be Different*. Rounded off by the creation of a lesson plan, the final part provides a subject-didactic viewpoint and puts theory into practice. The results obtained clearly demonstrate a general interconnectedness between alterity and identity, despite their differing forms of presentation in the primary examples. The portrayal of othering varies according to the composition of the book, the plot, the characters and their relationship. Substantiated through the teaching experience, I can safely affirm the effectiveness of picturebooks as a means to approach alterity with young adults in the EFL classroom.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit hat sich der Thematik des Andersseins mit dem Ziel angenommen, dessen Repräsentation in Bilderbüchern und deren Eignung für die Vermittlung von sozialen Werten im Englischunterricht an österreichischen AHS zu untersuchen. Angesichts der kontinuierlich fortschreitenden internationalen Beziehungen besteht die dringende Notwendigkeit nach Akzeptanz gegenüber Fremdem. Die Auseinandersetzung mit etwas Neuem soll dazu motivieren, über den eigenen, vertrauten Tellerrand hinauszublicken, und von der kulturellen und multilingualen Vielfalt Gebrauch zu machen. Dies erweist sich auch als besonders signifikant für den Schulkontext. Demnach obliegt es Lehrkräften nach den im Lehrplan bereits klar verankerten Regeln für interkulturelles Lernen zu unterrichten, und ihren SchülerInnen durch ein sensibles Herantasten an Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zu fremden Kulturen einen wertschätzenden Umgang mit ihren Mitmenschen zu lehren. Durch den direkten Zugang zu Literatur bietet der Englischunterricht zahlreiche Optionen, sich einer neuen Welt anzunähern. Speziell Bilderbücher präsentieren Geschehnisse auf einer abstrakten Ebene, die eine Distanz ermöglicht, es aber trotzdem schafft, wesentliche Botschaften zu vermitteln. Vor diesem Hintergrund hinterfragt diese Arbeit die Tauglichkeit dieses Genres für interkulturelles Lernen mit Jugendlichen. Außerdem wird untersucht, inwieweit das Anderssein unter interkulturelles Lernen zu subsumieren ist. Folglich bedarf es einer umfassenden Herangehensweise, die sich aus theoretischen, analytischen und praktischen Untersuchungen zusammensetzt. Das Selbst und das Fremde bilden dabei die Herzstücke der gesamten Studie, so auch in der Analyse der Bilderbücher *Elmer*, *Something Else* und *It's Okay to Be Different*. Der Entwurf eines Stundenbildes und die praktische Umsetzung in der Klasse bilden den Kern der abschließenden fachdidaktischen Komponente. Aus den Ergebnissen wird ersichtlich, dass bei den Phänomenen der Identität sowie des Andersseins eine klare Verbindung besteht, obwohl sich ihre Präsentation in den Primärquellen, abhängig vom jeweiligen Bilderbuchgenre, doch unterscheidet. Unter Berücksichtigung aller Faktoren gilt es zusammenzufassen, dass sich Bilderbücher für die Behandlung von Anderssein im Sprachenunterricht mit Jugendlichen definitiv eignen.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – PowerPoint Presentation “It’s Okay to Be Different”

It’s Okay to Be Different

Lesson 1

Find the “odd” one out



apple – banana – carrot – orange

angry – funny – happy – friendly

Find the “odd” one out



apple – banana – **carrot** – orange

angry – funny – happy – friendly

Who am I?



It pulls itself together, stops and says out loud, „True, it’s a fact I’m not one of a crowd, But of course I’d be missed, Because I exist –

I AM ME!”

What is your identity?

Activity:

Take a sheet of paper and draw your own individual profile. You can also use personal symbols or anything that describes you.



Who is who?



Find a title



Your suggestions:



Your suggestions:



ZEBRA-THINKING

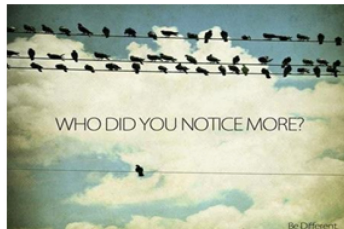


I AM ME



It's Okay to Be Different

Lesson 2



- Describe: What do you see?
- Positive or negative feelings?
- What does it have to do with similarities and differences between people?



I, me, myself



The others

- Focus on differences
- Can have negative consequences

Elmer

There was once a herd of elephants. Elephants young, elephants old, elephants tall or fat or thin. Elephants like this, that or the other, all different but all happy and all the same colour. All, that is, except Elmer. Elmer was different.

Something Else

On a windy hill alone with nothing to be friends with lived Something Else. He knew that he was what he was because everyone said so. If he tried to sit with them or walk with them or join in their games, they always said: "Sorry. You're not like us. You're something else. You don't belong."



Appendix 2 – Writing Activity on *Elmer*

Look at the picture and *characterize Elmer*. Keep in mind the following points, discuss with your group and write down about 100 - 120 words:

- What is he like?
- Why is he different?
- Does he have a problem with being different? Yes / No? Why?
- Do the others have a problem with him being different? Yes / No? Why? What are they doing?



Appendix 3 – Writing Activity on *Something Else*



Look at the picture. *Something Else* gets to know somebody new in the story. Discuss the following points with your group and write down about 100-120 words.

- Who is this new little creature next to *Something Else*?
- What is his / her / its name?
- Does *Something Else* like the new one? Why / why not? Is he different from *Something Else*? Yes / No, how?

Appendix 4 – Feedback sheet

- 1) Describe **alterity** in your own words. What does it mean? (please answer in English!)
- 2) Do you like it when picturebooks are used in the English lesson? Yes / No why?
- 3) Do you think you are too old for picturebooks?
- 4) What did you like most / least about the last two lessons?
- 5) Anything else you want to say?

Lebenslauf

Eva Matscheko

Geboren 1991 in Linz, Oberösterreich

Ausbildung

1998 - 2002	Volksschule 50 – Ferdinand-Hüttner-Schule, Linz
2002 - 2010	BG/BRG Ramsauerstraße, Linz
2010 - 2015	Lehramtsstudium für UF Englisch und UF Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung an der Universität Wien

Studien- und Berufsbezogene Arbeitserfahrung

2013 - 2014	Kursleitung Englisch Lernferien, Lernwerkstatt-C.E., Wien
2015	Pädagogische Mitarbeiterin am Feriencamp der Kinderfreunde Oberösterreich

Wissenschaftliche Interessensschwerpunkte

Englisch	Fachdidaktik: Bilder – und Jugendbücher im Englischunterricht; Interkulturelles Lernen; Mehrsprachigkeit im Fremdsprachenunterricht
Geschichte	Fachdidaktische und kompetenzorientierte Aufbereitung der Geschichte; Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte; Jüdisches Wien

Sprachliche Kenntnisse

Deutsch	Muttersprache
Englisch	Level C2 in Wort und Schrift
Französisch	Level B1 in Wort und Schrift

Sonstiges

2006 - 2008	Ausbildung zur Tutorin und Teilnahme am TutorInnenprojekt: „OberstufenschülerInnen unterstützen Erstklassler“ im Ramsauergymnasium, Linz
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