

# MASTER'S THESIS

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## Critical Literacy in the EFL Classroom Through Three Disney Animated Films

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## **Forord**

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## **Abstract**

Films are commonly used in the Norwegian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom for entertainment and educational value (Bakken, 2016). However, there is little focus on the critical value of films as an educational resource. Children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century grow up with an enormous exposure to films and television (Callister et al., 2007). However, they do not automatically inhibit the ability to view these multimodal representations critically (Lim & Tan, 2018). Therefore, animated film such as Disney can be considered as more than entertainment, they are also “teaching machines” (Giroux, 1994, p. 50). Disney is a world known multimodal entertainment company with immense product merchandise which builds children’s relationship from early on (Telotte, 2019). Disney has been scrutinized over the past years for their harmful, stereotypical, and racist content. Regardless, they have chosen to label their harmful content instead of removing it (Schild, 2020). Thus, it is important to view the representations in Disney films critically (Giroux, 1994). Films can be used to bridge the gap between the classroom and society through critically reflecting upon their roles as cultural products (Giroux, 2011). The Norwegian curriculum, both the core curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) and the subject curriculum of English (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a; 2020b), address the importance of developing and implementing critical thinking in school. Furthermore, the competence aims of the subject curriculum after year 10 explicitly states that pupils should engage with different types of texts, including multimodal representations (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). Since all texts can be considered as multimodal (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013), these competence aims include films.

Drawing on aspects from multimodal analysis and critical discourse analysis, I have explored how three Disney animated films can be used to promote critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom. I focused my analysis on three main themes: physical appearances, character traits, and gender roles. In addition, I have compared and contrasted these themes in these films. I found that the three films display archetypical and stereotypical representations, exclusion of diversity, relatively traditional gender representations, and complex character relationships. Reflecting upon how the characters are represented and implicit meanings behind these representations can develop the pupils’ critical literacy skillset because they have to read with and against the texts (Janks, 2019). Hence, exploring multiple perspectives and ulterior motives behind these representations can promote pupils’ critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom.

## Sammendrag

Filmer er typisk brukt i det engelske klasserommet i Norge som underholdning og undervisningsmateriale (Bakken, 2016). Til tross for dette er det lite fokus på den kritiske verdien filmer har som undervisningskilde. Barn fra det 21. århundre vokser opp med en enorm eksponering fra filmer og TV (Callister et al., 2007). Allikevel innehar de ikke automatisk evnen til å se kritisk på disse multimodale representasjonene (Lim & Tan, 2018). Derfor kan animerte filmer som Disney bli ansett som “læremaskiner” (Giroux, 1994, s. 50, min oversettelse), ikke bare underholdning. Disney er et verdenskjent multimodalt underholdningsselskap med en enorm markedsføring som bygger barns forhold til dem tidlig (Telotte, 2019). Disney har blitt kritisert de siste årene for deres skadelige, stereotypiske og rasistiske innhold. Til tross for dette har de valgt å merke det innholdet som er skadelig i stedet for å fjerne det (Schild, 2020). Derfor er det viktig å se kritisk på representasjonene i Disney filmer (Giroux, 1994). Filmer kan bli brukt for å fylle inn mellomrommet mellom klasserommet og samfunnet gjennom å kritisk reflektere på rollen de har som kulturelle produkter (Giroux, 2011). Den norske læreplanen tar for seg viktigheten av å utvikle og inkludere kritisk tenking i skolen både under grunnleggende ferdigheter (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) og læreplanen i engelsk (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a; 2020b). I tillegg står det eksplisitt i kompetansemålene for engelsk etter 10. klasse at elevene skal engasjere seg i ulike typer tekster, inkludert multimodale representasjoner (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). Siden alle tekster kan bli ansett som multimodale tekster (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013), inkluderer disse kompetansemålene filmer.

Gjennom aspekter fra multimodal analyse og kritisk diskursanalyse har jeg utforsket hvordan tre animerte Disney filmer kan bli brukt til å promotere kritisk tekstkyndighet i det engelske klasserommet i Norge. Jeg har fokusert analysen min på tre hovedtema: fysisk utseende, karaktertrekk og kjønnsroller. I tillegg har jeg sammenlignet og satt temaene i filmene i kontrast til hverandre. Funnene mine viser at de tre filmene har arketypiske og stereotypiske representasjoner, eksklusjon av mangfold, relativt tradisjonelle kjønnsrepresentasjoner og komplekse karakterforhold. Gjennom refleksjon om hvordan karakterene er representert og implisitte meninger bak disse representasjonene kan elevene utvikle kritisk tekstkyndighet fordi de må lese med og mot tekstene (Janks, 2019). Derfor kan utforskning av ulike perspektiver og bakenforliggende motiver gjennom disse representasjonene promotere elever sin kritiske tekstkyndighet i det engelske klasserommet i Norge.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Children from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are accustomed to viewing films and television from an early age (Callister et al., 2007). However, they are not born with the ability to critically view these multimodal representations. This is something they need to be taught (Lim & Tan, 2018). A critical literacy skillset can enable pupils to reflect upon and evaluate their own circumstances through self-awareness in relation to different social constructions or topics (Barbre, 2019). However, films are not commonly used for critical purposes in the Norwegian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Bakken, 2016). Disney has been scrutinized for their stereotypical and racist depictions. However, they have chosen to label their content as offensive instead of removing it (Schild, 2020). For the children viewing this media, the character representations can function as windows to the world (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). Consequently, it is important to view the representations and implicit messages critically, instead of merely entertainment (Giroux, 1994). There are several analytical approaches made by previous scholars to critically view the representations in Disney films, however, the scholars do not explicitly connect their findings to educational purposes. This is expressed as necessary by Giroux (1994), who claims that Disney animated films “(...) should be incorporated into schools as serious objects of social knowledge and critical analysis.” (p. 43). Hence, my research contributes toward filling a gap in English didactics in Norway. As an entrance into using Disney animated films for the promotion of critical literacy in the classroom, I have chosen to reflect upon the aptness of the three films *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991), *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010), and *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016). My research question is therefore: How can three Disney animated films be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom?

The immensity of Disney products, and their exposure to children through merchandise, provides opportunities for children from all over the world to dress up as their idols (Telotte, 2019). However, although they are exposed to films and multimodal representations from an early age, they do not automatically inhibit the ability to view them critically (Lim & Tan, 2018). Today’s society demands a literacy skillset that expands the ability to read and reproduce texts because of the exposure from digital mass media (O’Holloran et al., 2017). All literacy can be considered as critical literacy (van Leeuwen, 2017), which is why I have chosen this particular skill to promote in the Norwegian EFL classroom. This ability is explicitly addressed several places in the curriculum, LK20, both under the core curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017), the basic skills of the subject



curriculum of English (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a), and competence aims after year 10 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). Hence, the curriculum enhances the need for implementing critical literacy in today's EFL classroom in Norway.

In the following chapters, I will explore how three Disney animated films can be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom. In order to do this, I will first present the background for my research question and the academic foundation for my master's thesis. I will address relevant terminology, pertinent sections from LK20, and previous research on films in schools and representations in Disney. I will provide a detailed description of my research design, including the analytical and interpretative process of the material applied in this thesis. I will present my analysis of the three Disney animated films through the chosen analytical themes physical appearances, character traits and gender roles. My analysis consists of aspects from multimodal analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA), where I draw on perspectives from Burn (2013), van Leeuwen (2008), and Gee (2014). I have explored how semiotic resources are used to represent the different characters. I will discuss my findings in relation to previous research and reflect upon the aptness of the chosen films for promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom. The final chapters will present my concluding remarks, the implications, and limitations of this study.

## **2.0 Background**

According to Giroux (1994), animated films such as Disney are more than just entertainment, they are also “teaching machines” (p. 50) through their representations and implicit messages. Disney creates a window to the world for children, which is why they need to be taught to view them critically (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). Disney has been scrutinized for their depiction of stereotypical and racist content in their films. Their response to the criticism has been to acknowledge, learn from, and label the offensive content, rather than to remove it (Schild, 2020). Children are exposed to these representations, which might leave both positive and negative impressions (Gray, 2019). Through my master's thesis, I wanted to explore how the three films can be used for critical literacy education in the Norwegian EFL classroom. This critical literacy education should empower pupils to challenge stereotypical representations they encounter in several types of media such as films, games, commercials, and social media, to mention some. I aimed the research towards the lower secondary school and the Norwegian EFL classroom. The relevance of my research for the EFL classroom is that films and other media exposure are often linked to the English-speaking world. Furthermore, it is custom to

view the films in its original language or a dubbed version. Disney is American, which makes the original language English.

To my knowledge, there are very few studies so far that have investigated the potential of critical literacy education through films in the EFL context, especially in Norway. There are some recent national and international contributions related to films and multimodal texts in schools (Diamantopoulou & Ørevik, 2022). However, most of these contributions do not investigate films in relation to critical literacy. Hence, my study contributes toward filling a gap in English didactics in Norway.

### **3.0 Theory**

This chapter is divided into five subchapters that provide an academic foundation for my project. The first subchapter, **3.1 Literacy**, focuses on the broad term literacy and more specifically critical literacy. I emphasize here that literacy includes more than just reading and writing print texts, it also includes awareness of the communicative features of multimodal texts such as films. The second subchapter **3.2 Multimodality and films in schools** addresses multimodality and the role of films in schools with a focus on the Norwegian classroom. The third subchapter, **3.3 LK20**, presents relevant aspects from the core curriculum, basic skills of the subject curriculum, and competence aims after grade 10. These three sections in LK20 justify inclusion of films for critical literacy education in the Norwegian EFL classroom. There is no direct translation of the English term *literacy* to Norwegian, however, terms such as critical thinking and critical reflection are frequently used in the curriculum. Regardless, I have chosen to use the term critical literacy in my research question because I feel that it is a more precise term for the skill I intend to promote. Subchapter **3.4 Intercultural competence** displays the importance of critical literacy and intercultural competence in the EFL classroom. In addition, I will present a section here that focuses on metacognition and CDA. The last subchapter, **3.5 Representation in Disney**, is divided into two sections. The first section displays what other scholars have found when they have analyzed different representations in Disney animated films. The second section focuses more on the use of Disney animated films in classroom contexts.

#### **3.1 Literacy**

Literacy is a rather broad and complex term which has been defined by several scholars. A group of ten scholars called The New London Group wrote an overview of the changing social environment and the new approach to literacy pedagogy called “multiliteracies”

(Cazden et al., 1996, p. 63). They argued that there was a need for a new term that included all of the literacies in society, not merely the traditional literacy pedagogy which focused on reading and writing print texts. The term “multiliteracies” includes the societal changes that consists of both multimedia technologies and “(...) our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate.” (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 61). Their goal was to broaden the understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy by including a multiplicity of discourses due to cultural differences and shifting communication media (Cazden et al., 1996). One of these shifts have been the media-rich world with its multimodal representations, which requires multimodal literacy (Lim & Tan, 2018). According to Lim and Tan (2018), “Multimodal literacy (...) is about students learning to view multimodal texts critically and to communicate effectively through multimodal representations.” (p. 291), which is highly relevant for my research where critical literacy is promoted through multimodal texts. Jewitt (2008), states that “The concept of multiple literacies has emerged in response to the theorization of the new conditions of contemporary society” (p. 342), which supports The New London Group’s (Cazden et al., 1996) argument for a new term. Furthermore, Gee (2012) displays a shift from a psychological approach through print literacy to a cultural and social approach involving multiple literacies. The multiple literacies he refers to here is the same term which The New London Group introduced, which is “multiliteracies” (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 63). It is important to be able to critically analyze and interpret multimodal texts, especially in the 21-century with the digital mass media (O’Holloran et al., 2017). According to O’Holloran et al. (2017) “Advancements in technology in the digital age demand literacy skills that expand beyond the mere ability to read, view and (re)produce multimedia texts and videos.” (p. 152). Hence, they are endorsing the need for an expansion of the term such as argued for by The New London Group (Cazden et al., 1996), Jewitt (2008), and Gee (2012). van Leeuwen (2017) argues that “Multimodal literacy therefore also needs to be critical literacy, especially in relation to the way technological tools favour certain forms of discourse.” (p. 10). Hence, all literacy can be considered as critical literacy.

Critical literacy is a rather complex term with several definitions. Freebody and Freiberg (2010) have provided ten definitions, which display the different aspects and understandings of the term. The differences in these definitions are related to the cultural settings, times, technologies, and function in society. However, all these definitions involve the skills required to read and write. They were provided in a time span of 49 years, from 1957 to 2008,

which indicates a development over the years (Freebody & Freiberg, 2010). These definitions indicate that the term involves more than merely the ability to read and write, rather a deeper comprehension which includes the understanding that no text is neutral. This means that all texts are positioned by the author and work to position the consumers (Janks, 2018). Positioning of texts are supported by Lewinson et al. (2002), who claim that critical literacy has four interrelated dimensions. These dimensions are interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, disrupting the commonplace, and taking action and promoting social justice. I will use Fajardo's (2015) statement "Critical literacy involves the exploration of multiple perspectives." (p. 32) as a definition of the complex term. This statement shows that there are multiple perspectives of a text that need to be explored, which is one of the four dimensions of critical literacy according to Lewinson et al. (2002). Critical literacy explores all types of texts, and "Critical literacy practices lead to the interrogation of the ulterior motives and below-surface ideas of all types of texts, including visual, print, digital and audio." (Ciardiello, 2004, p. 138). Thus, it is important to learn how to read with and against texts (Janks, 2019). It is easier to read with a text we agree with, and against a text we disagree with. The opposite is much more difficult. Janks (2019) expresses the importance of being able to read both with and against texts regardless of our own opinions. The meaning of texts can be redesigned and thus changed in meaning, which is why it is important to engage with texts and critical literacy in the classroom (Janks, 2012).

Hall (1998) argues that critical literacy should be included in pedagogy from early on. She emphasizes that critical literacy is important in every setting because:

(...) the literacy one practices powerfully influences, even produces (rather than merely reflects), one's consciousness, i.e. one's beliefs, values, assumptions and related behaviour. Consciousness, in turn, impacts on literacy, influencing one's literacy practices, thus a dialectic relationship exists between literacy and consciousness. (p. 188)

Consequently, it is important to implement critical literacy in the lower secondary school because pupils might have developed different knowledges from their previous schooling. I will address these different knowledges and the value of implementing critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom through Disney animated films in the following subchapters.

### ***3.2 Multimodality and multimodal texts***

Multimodality is “(...) the study of how meanings can be made, and actually are made in specific contexts, with different means of expression or ‘semiotic modes’(...)” (van Leeuwen, 2017, p. 5). Hence, “(...) understanding how each semiotic resource makes meaning in itself and in combination.” (Lim & Tan, 2018, p. 292). The different semiotic resources are intertwined to create meaning. Each mode works for a specific purpose. Kress (2010) explains multimodality and the relationship of the different modes as “(...) the normal state of human communication.” (p. 1). A commercial sign uses e.g., three modes, image, writing, and color, where the image shows the message instead of using a lot of words, the writing explains the things that are hard to show, and the color highlights important aspects of the message. In order to understand the different modes and how they function in combination they must be viewed critically. According to Kress (2010), globalization impacts and influences social relations through the varied social, cultural, political, and economic conditions. He claims that “Representational and communicational practices are constantly altered, modified, and is all of culture, in line with and as an effect of social changes.” (Kress, 2010, p. 7). All texts can be considered as multimodal because they consist of several modes through their visual dimensions, which means that films are multimodal texts (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). Kress (2010) claims that texts not only can be considered as multimodal, rather that they “(...) are always multimodal (...)” (p. 157). The New London Group (Cazden et al., 1996) supports and expands this by stating that “(...) all meaning-making is multimodal.” (p. 81). They argue that people are positioned by their available modes for meaning-making which influences how the meaning is transformed and redesigned.

Films can both entertain and educate. They possess a large part of children’s, tweens, and teenagers’ lives, which is why films in school can be both justified and questioned (Munden, 2017). Children are very often accustomed to films and other multimodal and moving image media, which makes it natural to include films in their education. However, there might be some questions to how the films are used and what purpose they serve, with the consideration that pupils use a lot of their spare time to view multimodal representations (Munden, 2017). According to Brown and Habegger-Conti (2017), “(...) images and how they position readers should be a part of EFL teaching.” (p. 16). Hence, there should be a focus on the critical aspect of multimodal texts in the Norwegian EFL classroom. Bakken’s (2016) research of 18 Norwegian English teachers’ beliefs of the learning value of films in school shows that teachers have little focus on films as an educational recourse for critical use. She categorized

the beliefs of the learning value into four assumptions. These assumptions are the referential, the compensatory, the emotional, and the language value. Overall, the teachers emphasize the importance of showing “good films” suited to the topic and agree that films have educational value. However, the educational value of films is forefronted by the teachers as “(...) a means to compensate challenges related to language.” (Bakken, 2016, p. 14). The educational value of films is expressed as necessary by Giroux (2011), who states that it is important to “(...) use film as a cultural text to bridge the gap between the academic discourse of the classroom and those social issues and public concerns that animate the larger society.” (p. 639).

Furthermore, he argues that:

The power and pervasiveness of films not only call into question their status as cultural products, but raise serious questions about how their use of spectatorial pleasure and symbolic meaning work to put into play people’s attitudes and orientation toward social others and the material circumstances of their own lives. (Giroux, 2011, p. 690)

However, pupils do not automatically inhibit the ability to consider the influential effect that films have on them in a critical manner. This is something they need to be taught (Lim & Tan, 2018). Furthermore, pupils might find it difficult to view films more actively in a school setting compared to viewing them passively at home (Villanueva, 2020). Hence, it is important that they are provided with instructions of what they are expected to do while they are viewing the film (Villanueva, 2020). The teacher can not expect them to automatically change their way of viewing the media without explicit knowledge of how this is done.

### **3.3 LK20**

The core curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) has a section regarding critical thinking and ethical awareness. This section addresses the importance of developing and implementing critical thinking in school. In order to develop the ability to be critical, pupils must be challenged to understand that their points of view might be incomplete or flawed. Critical thinking and ethical awareness are necessary to learn in different contexts in order to develop good judgement (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). In addition, the core curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017) has a section regarding interdisciplinary topics. Two of these topics, *Health and life skills* and *Democracy and citizenship*, are highly relevant to my research question. The interdisciplinary topic *Health and life skills* “(...) shall give the pupils

competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices.” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). This description relates directly to critical literacy education. The second interdisciplinary topic, *Democracy and citizenship*, states that pupils “(...) shall train their ability to think critically, learn to deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement.” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Here, the importance critical thinking and understanding that people have different opinions is addressed, which is highly relevant to intercultural competence which I will address later.

There are several competence aims in the subject curriculum after year 10 that address the pupils’ ability to engage with different types of texts, including multimedia texts (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). Pupils should be able to “write formal and informal texts, including multimedia texts with structure and coherence that describe, narrate and reflect, and are adapted to the purpose, receiver and situation”, “read, discuss and present content from various types of texts, including self-chosen texts”, and “read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people’s literature” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). These competence aims postulates that pupils are engaged with various types of texts in the classroom, including multimodal texts such as films.

The *Reading* section under the basic skills of the subject curriculum states that the development of reading skills requires pupils to “(...) being increasingly able to critically reflect on and assess different types of texts”, and “(...) reading and finding information in multimedia texts with competing messages and using reading strategies to understand explicit and implicit information” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). This relates to Janks’ (2019) argument that pupils must learn how to read both with and against texts because no text is neutral.

### ***3.4 Intercultural competence***

Intercultural competence is defined by Huber et al. (2014) as a:

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

with such people; understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural "difference". (pp. 16-17)

Huber et al. (2014) also emphasize that "An individual's intercultural competence is never complete but can always be enriched still further from continuing experience of different kinds of intercultural encounter." (p. 17). Intercultural competence is a significant dimension in the foreign language classroom because of the relationship between language and culture (Hoff, 2020). Kramsch (2013), explains the relationship between language and culture accordingly, "Without language and other symbolic systems, the habits, beliefs, institutions, and monuments that we call culture would be just observable realities, not cultural phenomena. To become culture, they have to have meaning." (p. 62). The meaning that are constituted, constitutes culture (Kramsch, 2013). Hence, the language teaching in the EFL classroom is influenced by other cultures and influences how other cultures are perceived.

Dypedahl and Lund (2020) refer to several interpretations of the complex concept of intercultural competence, however, the main gist is the ability to relate to cultures or people that differ from one's own. This implies that every situation between two or more individuals might potentially be an intercultural situation, which requires the ability to handle this diversity (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020). It is important to exhibit metacognition of one's own beliefs both as a teacher and learner because "Research indicates that the experience of spending time abroad or engaging with FL texts in educational settings may very well serve to confirm, rather than challenge, stereotypical views." (Hoff, 2020, p. 79). Many teachers rely on the textbook as the mainstay educational resource (Byram & Wagner, 2017). However, some textbooks tend to create a focus on "us and them" through their depiction of cultures through multimodal representations (Risager, 2020). The "us and them" declaration can influence how the pupils' experiences other cultures, which is why it is important to increase their intercultural competence without emphasizing the differences through creating barriers (Risager, 2020). The preconception that both teachers and pupils have must be critically reflected upon, which is why metacognition is an important aspect of critical literacy and intercultural competence (Olin-Scheller & Tengberg, 2017).

### ***3.4.1 Metacognition and discourses***

Byram (2014) expresses a need for implementing the significance and understanding of intercultural competence in teacher education in order to create good learning environments for pupils without biased and stereotypical representations which meets the demands of the



globalized and diverse world we live in. Pupils' primary knowledges and beliefs prior to starting school are called their primary discourses. The knowledge they acquire through school is called secondary discourses (Gee, 2003, referenced in Olin-Scheller & Tengberg, 2017). Through increasing pupils' critical literacy, and hence their intercultural competence, they will develop their secondary discourses which involves metacognition of how and what we think. Olin-Scheller and Tengberg (2017) state that "Metacognition may also facilitate a critical approach to different texts, and could be an important aspect of critical literacy perspectives." (p. 429). In parallel to primary and secondary discourses, there are horizontal and vertical discourses. The horizontal discourse is the knowledge that pupils inherit related to language competences while the vertical discourse is more specialized and generalized knowledge. The vertical discourse is closely related to critical literacy because it entails evaluating and analyzing the texts. The horizontal discourse is more related to informal language of the every-day where common sense is central (Bernstein, 2000, referenced in Olin-Scheller & Tengberg, 2017). Viewing Disney animated films critically can aid pupils to expand their discourses from primary and horizontal to secondary and vertical.

In similar way that all types of literacy can be considered as critical literacy, all discourse analysis can be considered as CDA. This is according to Gee (2014), who claims that "(...) all discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis, since all language is political and all language is part of the way we build and sustain our world, cultures, and institutions." (p. 10). Hence, CDA and critical literacy intertwine. This connection is also supported by van Leeuwen (2008), who claims that the ways of representing can be realized through different semiotic modes both visually and verbally, which is

(...) important for critical discourse analysis for, with the increasing use of visual representation in a wide range of contexts, it becomes more and more pressing to be able to ask the same critical questions with regard to both verbal and visual representations, indeed, with regard to representations in all of the "media" that form parts of contemporary "multimedia" texts. (p. 25)

### ***3.5 Representation in Disney animated films***

This chapter will present previous research regarding representation in Disney animated films from 1937 until today. This research mainly focuses on how gender, age, race, sexual orientation, and physical appearances are portrayed. Several of these scholars emphasize the importance of implementing a critical awareness of Disney animated films in schools and at

home. I have divided this subchapter into two sections to display both previous scholarly work that has been done on Disney animated films with a focus on film analysis and how these films can be used in EFL contexts.

### ***3.5.1 Scholarly Disney film analysis***

This section presents previous scholarly work that has focused on Disney animated film analysis. Here, I present scholars that have analyzed how different characters are represented with a focus on age, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and stereotypes.

Zurcher and Robinson (2018) provide an evaluation of how older characters are portrayed in 42 Disney films from 2004 to 2016. Their findings suggest that there is a lack of representation of older people in children's media. Older people in Disney are displayed in a rather negative way, yet there are some improvements in more recent films where the characters are represented in a more realistic manner (Zurcher & Robinson, 2018).

Furthermore, the majority of the older characters are male and Caucasian. Their study also displays a trend where natural aging features such as wrinkles and grey hair are decreasing (Zurcher & Robinson, 2018). According to Zurcher and Robinson (2018), this might lead children to believe that such natural aging features are unnatural or not central to the aging process, which might cause them to view aging as something negative. Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund, and Tanner (2004) found similar negative portrayals, especially of non-dominant groups, in their analysis of 26 Disney films from 1937 to 2000. They focused on how gender, race, age, and sexual orientation were represented. The representations they found showed that many Disney films portray both positive and negative images of gender, race, and culture. Furthermore, there are many stereotypical representations of gender, race, age, and sexual orientation presented in the media, and these stereotypes are also found in Disney's work (Towbin, Haddock, Zimmerman, Lund & Tanner, 2004). In addition, Bazzini et al. (2010) claim that both media and Disney portrayals reinforce societal stereotypes. Their two studies mainly focused on how the physical attractiveness stereotype was displayed in 21 Disney animated films and how this influenced pupils. This stereotype is based on the perception that physical attractive people possess more positive qualities and have better life outcomes than unattractive people, which means that they are more likely to achieve the life they want. Their findings of the second study showed that children and adults show a preference for attractive peers over unattractive peers (Bazzini et al., 2010).

England et al. (2011) examined stereotypical depictions of gender in Disney through the traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics of the princes and princesses in nine Disney Princess films from 1937 to 2009. Their findings revealed that the princesses and princes differed significantly on their total feminine and masculine characteristics. Furthermore, older films depicted more traditional gender roles compared to more recent films. They state that “It is apparent that gendered stereotypes and behaviors are still very prevalent in the Disney Princess line, though their depiction has become more complex over the years, reflecting changing gender roles and expectations in American society.” (England et al., 2011, p. 563). The gender roles and expectations they address here do not only apply for the American society but is evident in the rest of the world as well. Hine et al. (2018) expanded this research with a focus on five more recent Disney films released from 2009 to 2016. Their findings show that the princesses “(...) were largely androgynous in their behavioral profiles, but that they are increasingly instrumental in the resolution of dangerous situations, and are no longer restricted to traditional romantic resolutions.” (Hine et al., 2018, p. 13). They also found that the princes showed more feminine behavior in more recent films. Hence, they argue that Disney displays more androgynous and diverse characters in more recent films. However, the mainstream sexuality in Disney is still heterosexuality (Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009).

### ***3.5.2 The influential aspect of Disney***

Disney films are more than just entertainment, they are also “teaching machines” (Giroux, 1994, p. 50) when viewed critically. However, viewing films critically is something that needs to be taught because pupils do not automatically inhibit this ability despite their early exposure to the media (Lim & Tan, 2018). The representations in Disney might influence, and possibly already have influenced, pupils’ viewpoints and opinions through the way Disney creates a window to the world for young children (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). If pupils grow up with little exposure to other cultures in real life, they rely on the representations they encounter through e.g., Disney films (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). Furthermore, a lot of children today are exposed to the merchandise of Disney products and are eager to dress up in costumes which match their idols (Telotte, 2019). This might have both positive and negative effects, which I will display in this subchapter with a focus on how scholars view representation in Disney related to classroom context.

It is important to question how different representations in Disney animated films are displayed because “(...) animated films offer children intricate teachings about race and

sexuality.” (Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009, p. 167). According to Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth- Lugo (2009), Disney films “(...) serve as tools that help to teach children to maintain the racial (and racist) ideologies that maintain the status quo.” (p. 175). Media portrayals can influence the cultural competence of the consumers, which is why it is important to not overlook the hidden messages in Disney and emphasize that films are not real (van-Wormer & Juby, 2016). Representation of race in Disney is also one aspect that must be viewed critically (Benhamou, 2014). One example of this in Disney is their first animated film with a black princess in *The Princess and the Frog* (Clements & Musker, 2009). Disney changed Tiana’s name and profession after critique since she was originally named Maddie and worked as a chambermaid. Furthermore, although she is the first black princess, she is mostly represented as a frog (Benhamou, 2014).

Another example of how race and sexuality is displayed in Disney films is Pocahontas’ appearance in *Pocahontas* (Goldberg & Gabriel, 1995). Her clothing is very sexualized with a lot of bare skin revealed, which is not consistent with how the Native American women dressed at that time. Furthermore, her physical appearance with her slim waist, height, length of arms and legs, and large breasts display a striking resemblance to a Barbie doll (van-Wormer & Juby, 2016). Lacroix (2004) found that there is an increased focus on the body for female characters of color. This displays negative presentations of body image that the consumers might compare themselves to (Hine et al., 2018). Disney created the Disney Princess line in 2001 as a campaign to increase their products through the targeted consumers, specifically young girls. This campaign aimed for children to identify with the characters and therefore wanting their parents to purchase the products associated with the different princesses (England et al., 2011). This implies that the physical appearances that the children are to identify with is such as the appearances of e.g., Pocahontas. Lacroix (2004) claims that “These images will lay a groundwork for young children’s understanding of themselves and others that will most assuredly articulate with the field of images of both women of color and White women in popular culture.” (p. 227). Hence, children are influenced by how the portrayals of the characters in the largely consumed media that Disney animated films are.

#### **4.0 Method**

This chapter presents my social science approach and philosophical perspective where I reflect upon myself as a researcher and the validity and reliability of my research. I will present my research design with detailed descriptions of the analytical processes, summaries, and explanations of my choice of films.

#### ***4.1 Social science research approach***

This subchapter presents my reflections of how I position myself as a researcher from an ontological and epistemological perspective. In addition, I will present my philosophical perspective and reflect on how this influences me as a researcher. Hence, this subchapter presents my reflections of how my belief of knowledge influences my research. van Leeuwen (2008) claims that “(...) all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices.” (p. 5). Hence, CDA can be seen as the foundation for both my research methodology and method.

##### ***4.1.1 Ontology and epistemology***

According to Moon and Blackman (2014), ontology is “What exists in the human world that we can acquire knowledge about?” (p. 1169). They describe five sub-elements of the phenomenon, which are positioned in relation to the three sub elements of epistemology. Epistemology is “How do we create knowledge?” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1169). Høgheim (2020) tries to translate the term epistemology into something more recognizable, which turned out as “(...) theory about knowledge.” (p. 19, my translation). CDA can be seen as the foundation for the epistemological and ontological positioning of my research because it is, in addition to a method, a methodology that “(...) argues that language-in-use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices, and that social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power.” (Gee, 2014, p. 87). Hence, all research “(...) should be interpreted as representations of social practices.” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 5).

My research is qualitative because it relies on detailed investigations of the films through perspectives that are drawn from CDA and multimodal analysis (Johannessen et al., 2021). The multimodal analysis and CDA are intertwined because the multimodal analysis provides the foundation for the CDA. The semiotic resources detected through multimodal analysis provides the foundation for analyzing how the characters are represented through CDA. Due to my qualitative research method, I place my research under the section relativism in the branch under ontology. There is not one truth in my qualitative research, rather “Realities exists as multiple, intangible mental constructions; no reality beyond subjects.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1169). This means that there are several ways to acquire knowledge from the films and that viewing them through the lens of CDA with support from multimodal analysis is only one way of these ways. My research method depends on my subjective view of analysis, through a multimodal and CDA lens, which is supported by the relativist ontology

“Relativists argue that reality exists in the mind, with each individual creating his or her version.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1172). The connected branch from epistemology is the section subjectivism, which states that “Meaning exists within the subject; subject imposes meaning on an object.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1169) and “Subjectivist epistemology (...) holds that what constitutes knowledge depends on how people perceive and understand reality.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1172), which is exactly what I have done through my analysis of the three films.

I have created meaning through analysis of the films, and thereby created meaning that is influenced by my previous experiences and knowledge. Hence, my theoretical perspective is based on that “Knowledge acquisition is inductive, value-laden, contextually unique.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014). This is supported by Gee (2014), who claims that “We humans can analyze nearly anything in terms of meaning. We can treat anything as a sign or symbol and give it some meaning.” (p. 17). I might value and focus more on themes I find useful for the promotion of critical literacy in the lower secondary classroom compared to someone who analyzes the same films for another purpose.

#### ***4.1.2 Philosophical perspective***

The philosophical perspective is something personal and shaped by my beliefs as a researcher. Philosophical perspectives are also called paradigms and reflect the complexity of philosophy, which means that it is common to resonate with more than one philosophical perspective (Moon & Blackman, 2014). I commit to both the philosophical perspectives interpretivism and critical theory because I believe that there is more than one truth which is contradictory to the conviction of the philosophical perspective of positivism.

An interpretive view implies that the reality is interpreted through culture and history (Moon & Blackman, 2014). My perspective is influenced by the culture I have grown up in and representations of social practices (van Leeuwen, 2008), trends, that are current in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I believe that there are several truths of a phenomenon that can be interpreted in different ways by different individuals. Therefore, I have a hermeneutical perspective to this research (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Hermeneutics can be understood as interpretation of texts and therefore a philosophical approach because it is relevant in all methodological approaches to research that include texts (Høgheim, 2020). According to Moon and Blackman (2014), hermeneutics implies that “Hidden meaning (of language) exists in texts, practices, events & situations, beneath apparent ones.” (p. 1169). Through CDA, I have examined how

different semiotic resources provide multiple perspectives through their representations of the characters in the three Disney animated films (Ciardiello, 2004). What I present as findings are my interpretations and not a given truth. Hence, I have a hermeneutic philosophical perspective as a researcher. Høgheim (2020) refers to Hans-Georg Gadamer as a central philosopher of hermeneutics, and more specifically how to understand and create knowledge. The argument he presents is that a researcher will always be subjective regardless of the methodological approach because of the preconception of the researcher which influences and shapes the research. Consequently, I have assessed my own observations critically during the analysis due to the influence of my preconception through my experiences, beliefs, and values.

Critical theory “(...) focuses on power relations, critiques assumptions and evolves.”, which means that the “Research and theory should be used to change situations.” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1169). This aligns with CDA, which aims to expose the way different discourses build and sustain the world (Gee, 2014). Pupils need to be taught how to critically view films and other media because they do not automatically inhibit this ability (Lim & Tan, 2018). In order to do this, I have analyzed the films critically and constructed meaning through my investigation of the films through reading with and against them (Janks, 2019). The outcome of the analysis is therefore dependent on the context I analyze the films for, and the knowledge I have attained an analysis of chosen themes presented in the films. I have challenged the messages presented in Disney films through aspects from multimodal analysis and CDA where I have reflected upon how different representations can influence pupils. The philosophical perspective is therefore, in addition to hermeneutics, based on critical theory because I want to expand how films are used in the Norwegian EFL classroom. As I mentioned earlier have research shown a trend that teachers do not use films as an educational resource for critical purposes (Bakken, 2016). I have myself been a naïve consumer of Disney animated films and I am challenging myself both as a researcher and as an educator through this thesis.

#### ***4.2 Validity, reliability, and generalizability***

In this subchapter, I will reflect upon the validity and reliability of my research. The validity of a research involves the degree of truth of the conclusion, while the reliability involves how the research have been conducted and how reliable the research is. Hence, these two aspects are intertwined, and influence each other. In addition, I will address the generalizability and transparency of my research. My research does not involve any personal information, which

means that I did not have to register my research at NSD due to the lack of privacy that needs to be accounted for (Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora, 2016).

#### ***4.2.1 Validity***

The validity of a research can be defined as the degree of truth of the conclusion and the quality of this truth (Høgheim, 2020). There are several degrees of validity which means that the research can have high or low degree of validity. Validity is not absolute, rather a claim of quality I must try to achieve as a researcher (Johannessen et al., 2021). Through the external validity, I assumed that there would be some generalizable conclusions from the analysis of the three selected films that could be applied through other films as well. However, I have not researched this because of my short timeframe, which is one of the factors that influenced the validity of the research. This is only a master's degree, which means that there was a limited amount of time to perform the actual research. However, my findings provide an indicator for how Disney animated films can be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom. An indicator displays a trend that might explain a phenomenon. It does not explain the entirety of the phenomenon, rather a part of it. The term validity shows to how certain the degree of truth I, as a researcher, am that my findings are complementary to the phenomenon I have researched (Høgheim, 2020). I have provided detailed descriptions of my analytical approach and relevant theory to justify my findings and hence increase the validity of this research.

#### ***4.2.2 Reliability***

The reliability of a research involves around how exact the data has been collected, how the data have been processed, and what data that are used. Hence, reliability means how reliable the research is (Johannessen et al., 2021). Reliability is crucial in quantitative studies that aims to find generalizability. However, demands of a certain reliability is not considered as pertinent to qualitative studies (Johannessen et al., 2021). Quantitative studies rely on structured ways of collecting data that are required to be duplicatable. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, relies on the subjective opinions of individuals. Therefore, it is impossible to duplicate the research because of the preconception of the researcher which influences the data collection and conclusion. My preconception, as I stated under my hermeneutic philosophical perspective, influenced the choices I made when I analyzed the films. Furthermore, it also influenced my ability to read with and against the texts, which is crucial for the validity of my research. In order to increase the reliability of my research, I have provided detailed descriptions of my choices and how I analyzed the films. Furthermore, I



will display possible limitations that influences the validity and reliability of my research (Johannessen et al., 2021).

#### ***4.2.3 Generalizability and transparency***

I have grown up with Disney animated films and viewed the development of the media from VHS until the streaming service Disney+. Therefore, I have seen how both the animation, representation, and storyline has developed coherently to the demands of the society. This is one strength that my preconception of Disney contributed to this research, which also influenced the reliability. I believe that it is easier for me to create general trends based on the three films compared to someone who is barely familiar to the media. According to Johannessen et al. (2021), it is more relevant to talk about the transparency of knowledge I achieved through my findings rather than the generalizability when it comes to qualitative research. Consequently, as I have discussed previously, my findings provide indicators of trends that are applicable to other types of media and other Disney animated films. The transparency of my research is shown through how I position myself as a researcher through my methodology and the detailed descriptions of how I conducted my research.

#### ***4.3 Research design***

As I stated under chapter **4.1 Social science research approach**, the research design is qualitative. The analysis combines multimodal analysis and central perspectives from CDA. Hence, I have analyzed how the different semiotic resources are used to represent different characters and how the filmmakers' use of these resources influences viewers positioning (Hall, 1997). I have drawn on key perspectives from van Leeuwen's (2008) CDA to explore how the different characters are represented and what potential characters that have been excluded or marginalized. I have divided my analysis into three subchapters. The themes in these subchapters are shown in **Figure 2** in the following subchapter, and they are physical appearances, character traits, gender roles, and contrasts. Inspired by CDA (van Leeuwen, 2008), these themes are chosen because I believe that they are apt for scrutinizing how the characters are represented in the three films based on the criticism that Disney has received for their depiction of stereotypical and racist content in their films (Schild, 2020).

Viewing representations in films critically in the Norwegian EFL classroom can develop critical literacy skills through challenging pupils' points of view on something familiar (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017), such as the appearances of well-known Disney characters. As I stated in the **Theory** chapter, children today are exposed to an

enormous Disney merchandise, which aims to idolize the characters for children (Telotte, 2019). Pupils should be able to critically reflect on different types of texts and understand the explicit and implicit information in multimedia texts (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a). These themes are one entrance into promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom.

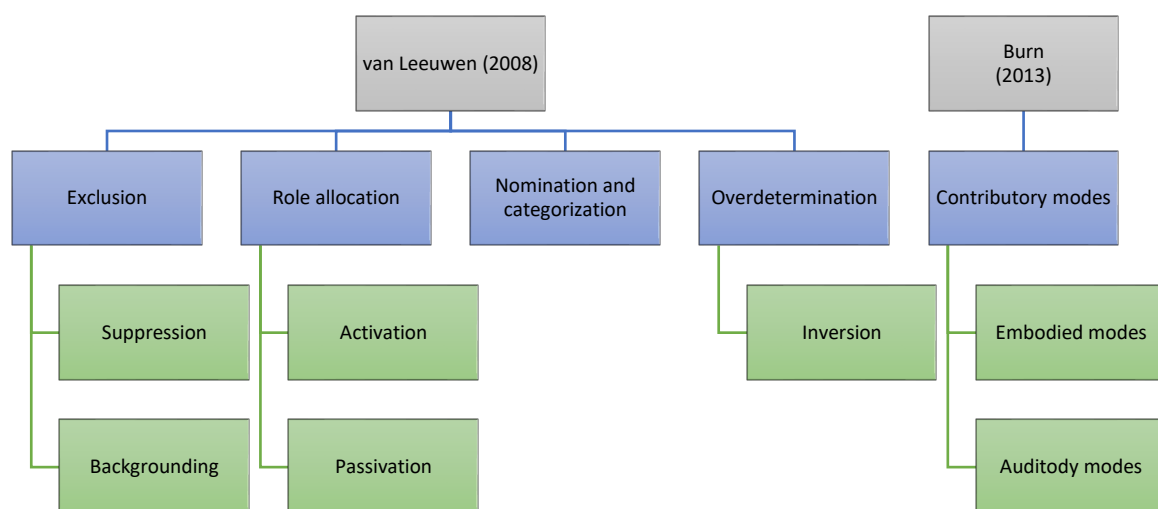
Animated films consist of multiple choices of construction. The animators and production team have complete artistic freedom of choice of how characters appearances turn out, the background, music, movements, and personalities which creates the holistic impression the consumers view (White, 2009). Through my analysis, I have examined the choices that the production team have made and reflected upon the outcome of their chosen representations. I have attempted to read both with and against the texts to discover what aspects of the films that are relevant for promoting critical literacy (Janks, 2019). However, I have not focused on the entirety of themes presented in these films, rather on a selected few. This is both because of my limited amount of time on this thesis, and because I believe that it is more valuable to focus more exclusively on fewer categories instead of barely touching upon several. I will address the classroom aspect of my research in the **Discussion** chapter. In the following subchapters, I will provide detailed descriptions of the analytical process, short summaries of the three films, a selection of the characters I focused my analysis on, and why I chose these specific films.

#### ***4.3.1 The analytical process***

Prior to viewing the films, I wrote down four main themes that I would focus my analysis on. These themes were inspired by the previous research displayed in chapter **3.5 Representation in Disney animated films**, and were physical appearances, character traits, gender roles, and stereotypes (Bazzini et al., 2010; England et al., 2011; Hine et al., 2018; Towbin et al., 2004). In the first phase of the analysis, I chose these analytical themes because they each work to position the consumers (Janks, 2018). Furthermore, the themes were selected based on what I believe pupils and young children observe while viewing the films, although they might not reflect upon their observations (Lim & Tan, 2018). Hence, the pupils who view the films will be positioned by semiotic resources that influence how the characters are represented (van Leeuwen, 2017). I started by viewing *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991), continued with *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010), and finished with *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016). I decided that the order of the viewing would not matter because of my previous knowledge of the films.

The analytical themes shed a light on the archetypal and stereotypical representations in Disney, which have been a key reason for the critique (Schild, 2020). Disney animated films creates windows to the world for children (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). Therefore, representations of the characters through their physical appearances, character traits, and gender roles can influence children by their portrayals (Lacroix, 2004). In this way, my analytical themes were inspired by aspects from CDA based on van Leeuwen (2008) and multimodal analysis based on Burn (2013). I have not included all of their aspects of CDA and multimodal analysis, rather a selected few which are displayed in **Figure 1** below. These aspects focus on how the characters are represented in texts. The characters, which is the common terminology in films, are called “social actors” by van Leeuwen (2008, p. 23). I will refer to them as characters throughout the analysis. The blue boxes represent the categories that I have drawn on in my analysis, and the green boxes are the chosen subcategories that I find particularly relevant for my analysis.

**Figure 1 - Analytical categories from van Leeuwen (2008) and Burn (2013):**



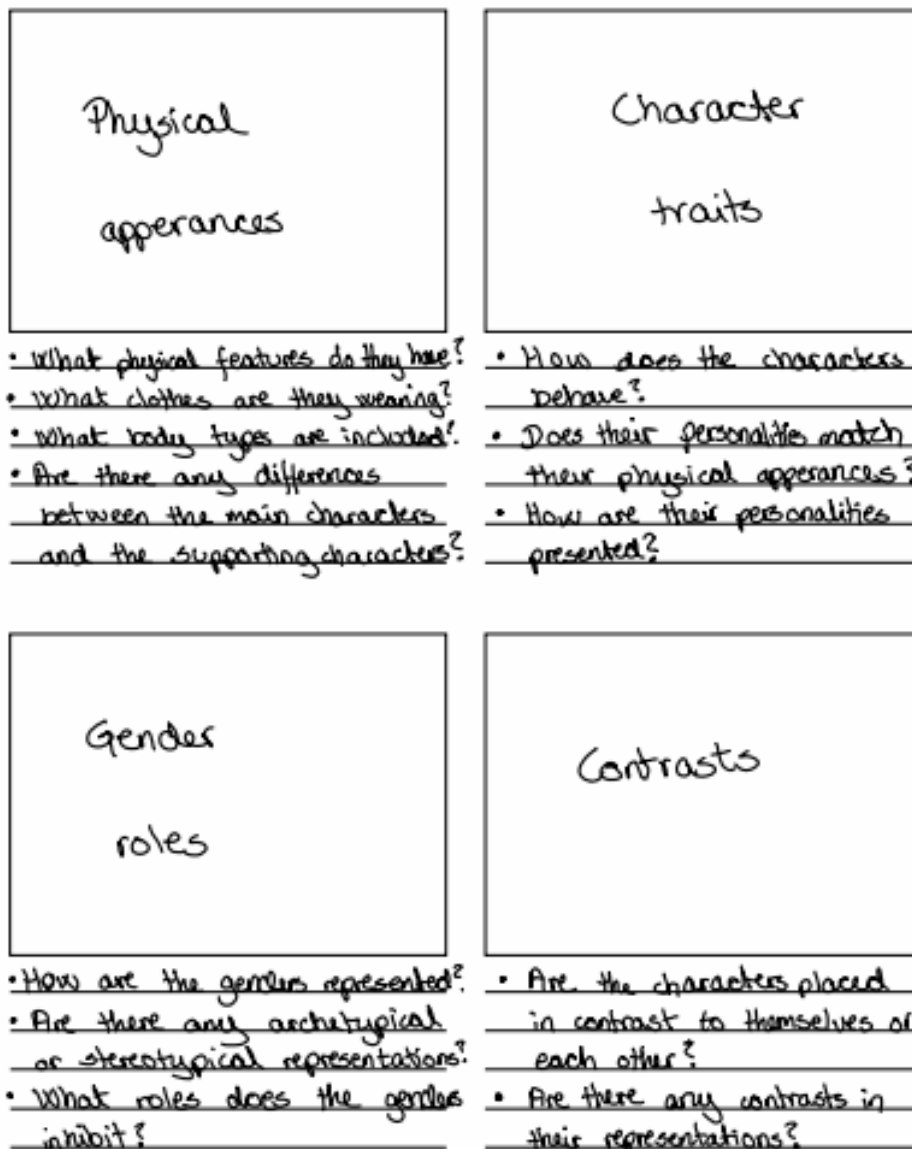
van Leeuwen (2008) divides the representation of social actors into 12 categories. I have chosen these four categories presented above because they suit the purpose of this research. Exclusion is an important aspect of CDA and focuses on the discourses of which social actors that have been included or possibly excluded through suppression, backgrounding or completely exclusion, which I will address in the **Discussion** chapter. Role allocation focuses on the roles social actors play in the representations, which can either activate or passivate them. Nomination and categorization focus on how the identity of the social actors are represented through their given names or nameless representations. The final category,

overdetermination, focuses on the social actors that are represented in more than one social practice simultaneously. I will address the subcategory inversion, which involves a social actor that is represented or connected to two opposing practices, in my analysis. Furthermore, I have included aspects from Gee (2014), such as significance, connections, and relationships to elaborate my findings. Burn (2013) divides the different semiotic modes into two categories: the orchestrating modes and the contributory modes. The orchestrating modes involve the modes related to filming and editing, hence functioning as overarching framing systems. I have focused my multimodal analysis on the contributory modes, which involve all of the other modes such as the characters' appearances through their costumes and embodied features.

In phase two, I viewed each film twice and wrote down the most relevant aspects of the films with the scheme presented in **Figure 2** below as support for my analysis. My notes were divided into the analytical themes as a way of structuring the analysis. The boxes represent the four analytical themes, while the questions listed below were supporting questions drawing on the categories from multimodal analysis and CDA presented in **Figure 1**. The questions were written down prior to viewing the films to aim my observations towards the targeted analytical categories. I wrote down my observations while viewing and paused to get the direct quotes which are referenced in the **Analysis** chapter. Consequently, I was automatically comparing the films' similarities and differences while viewing each film. In addition to the chosen analytical categories, I added more general notes for myself while viewing the films where I could write down aspects that was included or possibly excluded (van Leeuwen, 2008).

In the course of the second viewing of the film, I discovered that there were several contrasts, such as opposition in terms of how the role allocation and character relationships are represented in the three films (Gee, 2014; van Leeuwen, 2008), which made me include this as an additional theme instead of stereotypes. I will comment on the contrasting findings consecutively throughout the analysis to emphasize their functions. I excluded the intended theme stereotypes from phase one because it is a result of the representations presented in my analytical themes, not an analytical theme itself.

Figure 2 - Analytical themes:



#### 4.4 Material

In this chapter, I will provide short summaries of the three films that I have chosen, and the main characters that I have focused my analysis on. Furthermore, I will shortly display their aptness for the purpose of promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom. Each of these films possess elements that should be scrutinized, which I will address in the following subchapters. I have chosen these specific films because I believe that the pupils are acquainted with them from their childhood, and because of my own childhood acquaintance with them.

##### 4.4.1 *Beauty and the Beast*

*Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991) is about a girl named Belle. She is considered as very different from the rest of the villagers and wants to discover more of the world than

the small provincial town that she lives in. She does not want to settle down there and is not like the other female villagers who woo over the town's hunk, Gaston. He wants to marry Belle, but she refuses. She lives with her father who is an inventor. He is supposed to go to an invention but makes a wrong turn and ends up at the Beast's enchanted castle. The Beast is originally a prince who was cursed by an enchantress who was denied shelter in exchange for a rose because of the lack of love in his heart. She cursed him to stay this way for the rest of his life or until he found someone to love and who would love him in return before the enchanted rose that she offered would lose its last petal. Belle's father is captivated by the Beast and Belle sacrifices herself to trade places with him. Belle and the Beast eventually fall in love. Gaston eagers up the rest of the male townsfolk to kill the Beast out of spite and jealousy, and he manages to deadly wound him. He falls down from the spire while stabbing the Beast. The Beast is saved by Belle when she confesses her love for him and the spell is lifted, thus transforming everything and everyone back to their original state.

There are three main characters in this film. Belle and the Beast are the protagonists because the story mainly focuses on their background and relationship. Gaston is the main antagonist of the story. He has a sidekick that functions as the secondary antagonist, named LeFou. There are several deuteragonists which are important for the story. I will mainly focus my analysis on the three main characters, with input of the supporting characters LeFou, and three of the deuteragonists that are essential for the storyline. These deuteragonists are from the Beast's household staff; Lumiere, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts. LeFou follows Gaston around everywhere and aids him in his attempt to woo Belle. The three characters from the household staff are important contributors to the development of the Beast and Belle's relationship.

I have chosen this film because I believe that it romanticizes the relationship between Belle and the Beast through the positioning of the characters. In addition to my analysis, I will compare some of the characters from this version to the live-action adaptation from 2017 (Condon, 2017). The new adaptation includes more diversity than the original, which is interesting to compare. This is not the main focus of my analysis, rather an aspect of the **Discussion** chapter where I reflect upon the development of Disney animated films.

#### ***4.4.2 Tangled***

*Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010) is about a girl named Rapunzel who was abducted as an infant. She has magical hair that possesses healing and youth giving powers. Mother Gothel kidnapped Rapunzel for the magical powers of her hair. She forbids Rapunzel to leave the

castle, which she obeyed for almost 18 years. Every year on Rapunzel's birthday, the King and Queen releases thousands of lanterns into the sky. Rapunzel sees these "floating lights", without knowledge of what they are and a feeling that they are meant for her. After she encounters Flynn Rider, who is a thief that climbs into her hidden castle while on the run from the kingdom's guards, he guides her to find the lanterns because she hid his satchel with the stolen crown in. On their journey to the lanterns, they encounter several obstacles because of Flynn's background as a wanted thief. Flynn introduces the inn called "The Snuggly Duckling" to Rapunzel in an attempt to scare her of their deal because of the clientele that consists of thugs. They eventually arrive at the kingdom and fall in love on the way. A manipulative move from Mother Gothel makes Flynn Rider, who is originally named Eugene Fitzherbert, incarcerated and Rapunzel ends up back at the hidden castle. She understands that she is the long-lost princess, and Flynn/Eugene escapes from his hanging in order to save her. Mother Gothel stabs Flynn when he enters the castle and Rapunzel sacrifices herself to use her hair's magical powers to heal Flynn. He cuts her hair before being healed, thus withdrawing the magical powers from the hair, which turns brown. Mother Gothel immediately turns to her true, old self and falls down from the castle with help from Pascal who trips her while she tries to cover her face. Rapunzel reunites with her parents, the king and queen, and marries Eugene, who stopped calling himself for Flynn Rider.

There are three main characters in this film. Rapunzel is the protagonist of the story. Flynn Rider, originally named Eugene Fitzherbert, is the narrator of the story in the opening and ending scenes. He is also the deuteragonist of the story. Mother Gothel is the antagonist, although she is not considered as the villain by Rapunzel until the end. There are several supporting characters, such as the thugs at the inn "The snuggly Duckling", that are relevant for the story. I will address them as a group instead of each individual because they function as a group in the storyline. The thugs at the inn play an important role in how the storyline develops. Furthermore, they display some stereotypical representations that are recognizable and familiar to viewers. There are two anthropomorphized supporting characters as well, Pascal and Maximus, however, I will not focus on them in my analysis because they are mainly displayed with animal features.

I have chosen to analyze this film because it presents several stereotypes through the representations of the different characters. Disney replaced the film's title from *Rapunzel* to *Tangled* to be more gender neutral, hence broadening their audience without alienating the male audience through presenting the film with a female title (Davis, 2015). The gender roles

in this film are somewhat different from the gender roles in older Disney animated films where it is custom that the princess is displayed as rather helpless and saved by the prince (England et al., 2011). In addition, I believe that it is important to analyze the complex relationship between Rapunzel and Mother Gothel through their character traits and physical appearances, which I will address in the **Discussion** chapter.

#### ***4.4.3 Zootopia***

*Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016) is about a female bunny called Judy Hopps. She has always dreamed about becoming a police officer, despite of her size and species. All of *Zootopia*'s population are different mammals who walk on two feet and wear clothes. Judy becomes valedictorian of her police academy class and is assigned to District One in the capitol. The police officers at this police station are currently searching for 14 missing mammals. At her first day, she is the only police officer that is assigned to another assignment than the search. She is assigned to parking duty and makes it her mission to perform this job with excellence. While on this duty, she encounters the con-artist Nick Wilde and discovers his sly way of making money. She leverages him into helping her search for the missing mammals after she encounters the missing otter's wife and promises to find her husband. Chief Bogo is infuriated that she made this promise and gives her 48 hours to find Emmet, the missing otter, or quit her job. Judy and Nick used Nick's acquaintances to find information about what happened to Emmet. Nick was reluctant and tried to stall Judy at first, but eventually stood up for her against Chief Bogo after an incident where she saves his life. They find all of the missing mammals and learn that they are behaving like wild, savage animals. The mammals are all predators, which make the population of *Zootopia* scared that the rest of the predators will turn savage as well because the majority are preys. Judy and Nick ultimately find out that it is Assistant Mayor Bellwether that is the mastermind behind the savage mammals to gain power. She is incarcerated and Nick becomes a police officer and Judy's police partner.

There are two main characters in this film. Judy Hopps is the protagonist of the story and Nick Wilde is the deuteragonist. The antagonist of the story is Assistant Mayor Bellwether, although hidden until the end of the story. I will not focus on the character traits of Assistant Mayor Bellwether in the analysis, rather on her physical appearances. Furthermore, I will not present the supporting characters of the story in depth, nonetheless I will mention five characters: Chief Bogo, Officer Clawhauser, Mayor Lionheart, Flash, and Mr. Big. Their representations enhance some stereotypes that I will address in the **Analysis** chapter.



I have chosen this film because of the representation of the different mammal characters. The characters are anthropomorphized through their personal traits and labor, which can be connected to the different representations pupils encounter in media and real life. Although the film consists of anthropomorphized mammals, I believe that it is important to scrutinize how the characters are represented through physical appearances in addition to expectations and limitations connected to the different species because it can be drawn a parallel to real life.

## **5.0 Analysis**

In this chapter, I will provide an analysis of the three Disney animated films *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991), *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010), and *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016). As I explained under the **Method** chapter, my analysis consists of a combination of multimodal analysis and central perspectives from CDA (Burn, 2013; van Leeuwen, 2008). I have analyzed how the different semiotic resources are used to display different representations of the characters.

In the following subchapters, I will provide detailed descriptions of how the main characters of the three films are represented through the analytical themes displayed in **Figure 2 - Analytical themes**, with input from the categories presented in **Figure 1 - Analytical categories from van Leeuwen (2008) and Burn (2013)**. The analytical themes are physical appearances, character traits, gender roles, and contrasts. I will comment on the relevant contrasts consecutively throughout the analysis, while the other analytical themes are divided into three subchapters.

### **5.1 Physical appearances**

This subchapter provides detailed descriptions of the physical appearances of the chosen characters of the three films. These descriptions are important because they display how characters are represented semiotically. This influences how viewers experience the films (van Leeuwen, 2017). Both Belle and Rapunzel are a part of the Disney Princess line, which means that they possess similar appearances that resemble the rest of the Disney princesses through how their embodied modes are represented, such as their large eyes, slim waists, and flawless skin (Burn, 2013; England et al., 2011). The films *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1996) and *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010) consist of many songs, like a musical, which means that the physical appearances and personal traits are represented through both embodied and auditory modes (Burn, 2013). I will present a summary of the main characters'

physical appearances at the end of this subchapter to juxtapose the semiotic resources applied to represent the characters. I have divided the summary into two tables to juxtapose the female and male characters.

### ***5.1.1 Beauty and the Beast***

#### *5.1.1.1 Belle*

Belle is a part of the Disney Princess line and possesses the archetypal physical appearances of a Disney princess with her slim waist and limbs, large eyes, and flawless skin. She is Caucasian and has long, brown hair tied in her lower neck with a ribbon that matches her dress, and brown eyes. Her eyes are abnormally large, which resembles the rest of the Disney Princess line. Her teeth are white and shaped in a straight line. She wears a blue dress with a white shirt under, a white apron, and black loafers. The embodied modes (Burn, 2013), which involve gestures, facial expressions, make-up, and clothing, function to influence how the viewers experience Belle. The song “Belle” includes several statements of her beautiful appearance, such as “Now it’s no wonder that her name means beauty. Her looks have got no parallel.” (Trousdale & Wise, 1991, 6:18). Hence, the song strengthens the impression of Belle’s physical appearances through the auditory modes of music through melody and lyrics (Burn, 2013). Furthermore, her beauty is also supported by the film’s title, where she is categorized as someone beautiful instead of including her name, which van Leeuwen (2008) refers to as nomination. Gaston also claims that she is the most beautiful girl in town, and the only one who is as beautiful as himself. This supports the impression of Belle’s beautiful appearance and implies that Gaston is considered as the most handsome man in town.

#### *5.1.1.2 Gaston*

Gaston is Caucasian and has long, black hair tied in his lower neck with a ribbon, blue eyes, marked chin, slim waist, broad shoulders, and a lot of muscles. His eyes are not abnormally large. His teeth are white and shaped in a straight line. He wears a red t-shirt with a black belt, black leggings, black boots, and yellow gloves that match the color of his shirt collar. In the song “Belle” he is described as a tall, strong, handsome brute, and three of the female townsfolk are doing their best to gain his attention. The song “Gaston” praises his intimidating, masculine appearances and abilities that are unlike any other man. Hence, his physical appearances are represented both through the embodied and auditory modes such as Belle. Furthermore, his significant physical features are strengthened through the semiotic resources applied to represent LeFou, his sidekick, because of his contrasting appearances which I will address later. He possesses the stereotypical masculine attributes prevalent in

Disney princess films which is apparent in **Table 2** where his appearances are juxtaposed with the other male main characters from these three films (England et al., 2011).

#### *5.1.1.3 The Beast*

The Beast has blue eyes, brown fur, large fangs, claws, a tale, and two antlers on his head. When he is first introduced, he wears a red cape and a brown, ripped jeans. When he turns into the prince, the only physical feature that remains is his blue eyes. He is Caucasian, and has long, blonde hair, large lips, slim waist, and broad shoulders. He is muscular, but not as muscular as Gaston. The song “The Mob Song” expresses how the Beast’s appearance frightens the townsfolk when they see him through the enchanted mirror. They claim that he is going to eat their children with his razor-sharp fangs and killer claws. This emphasizes his categorization as a beast instead of a human individual through nomination (van Leeuwen, 2008). His physical appearance is mainly expressed through the embodied modes dramatic action and speech (Burn, 2013).

#### *5.1.1.4 Supporting characters*

LeFou is Caucasian, has brown hair, a big nose, a rather chubby physical appearance, and is a lot shorter than Gaston. He has large gaps between his teeth, and it might appear that he only has four teeth. Most of the townsfolk have similar gaps or lack several of their teeth as well. This implies that although he is a secondary antagonist, he resembles the townsfolk more than Gaston because of the embodied modes he is represented through, which strengthens the impression of Gaston’s masculinity. The three deuteragonists, Lumiere, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts are presented as cursed household items until the ending scenes. Lumiere is a candelabra, Cogsworth is a pendulum clock, and Mrs. Potts is a teapot. Their true human appearances resemble the cursed appearances through their body shapes and physical traits. Hence, their embodied modes such as facial expressions, movement, clothes, and gestures (Burn, 2013) are similar in their true human form and cursed form. Both Mrs. Potts and Cogsworth have a chubbier body shape, while Lumiere have a slimmer body shape. Cogsworth has a mustache, which is represented through the clock hands that are pointing towards the time ten past half five approximately. Their location makes it resemble a mustache. Mrs. Potts wears a dress that is the same color as her as a teapot, and her lid has the same shape as the hat she is wearing as a human. Lumiere has a pointy nose both as a candelabra and a human. Their physical appearances increase their nomination (van Leeuwen, 2008) through the connection between their names and household items.

## ***5.1.2 Tangled***

### *5.1.2.1 Rapunzel*

Rapunzel, like Belle, is a part of the Disney Princess line and possesses similar physical appearances (England et al., 2011). Unlike Belle, her physical appearance is not as explicitly expressed through the auditory modes, such as melody and lyrics, rather the embodied modes through how she is portrayed (Burn, 2013). She is Caucasian and has green, large eyes, extremely long, blonde hair, a round nose, and a slim waist. She wears a pink and purple dress that reaches to the middle of her calves and under-arms, and she is barefoot for the entirety of the film. Her hair possesses magical abilities and glows when she sings a special song. When it is cut, it loses its power and turns brown.

### *5.1.2.2 Mother Gothel*

Mother Gothel is Caucasian and has curly, black hair, large, blue/grey eyes, a pointy nose, slim waist, and rather large breasts. She is taller than Rapunzel and speaks with a more adult voice. She wears a red, long dress and her fingernails are covered with a dark red nail polish. The embodied modes used to represent Mother Gothel, such as her physical features, costume, gestures, movement, and facial expressions (Burn, 2013), enhance the difference between her and Rapunzel. They do not resemble, which strengthens the fact that Rapunzel has been kidnapped. According to DelRosso (2015), their lack of resemblance can be connected to how adopted children and their parents often lack similar physical attributes.

### *5.1.2.3 Flynn Rider/Eugene Fitzherbert*

Flynn Rider is Caucasian and has short, brown hair, a short black beard on his lower chin, and brown eyes that are smaller than Rapunzel's and Gothel's eyes. He claims that he has "(...) superhuman good looks (...)" (Howard & Greno, 2010, 58:55). He has broad shoulders and a slim waist. He wears brown jeans and boots, a white shirt, and a blue west. His shirtsleeves are folded almost back to his elbows. His embodied modes are similar to Gaston, both through his appearance and clothing.

### *5.1.2.4 Supporting characters*

The thugs at the inn are mostly muscular and armed. They are only male and all of them possess masculine traits such as muscles, broad shoulders, slim waists, and dark voices. They wear black or brown leather, helmets, and wrist bands. All of the thugs are Caucasian, similar as the main characters, and they are placed in contrast to Flynn Rider through their more intimidating appearances.

### **5.1.3 Zootopia**

#### *5.1.3.1 Judy Hopps*

Judy Hopps is a bunny with grey and white fur. She has large, purple eyes, long ears, slim waist, and walks on two feet. She has a feminine figure and wears a police uniform for the majority of the film. The uniform consists of a tight, blue jeans with knee protection, a blue sweater and a short vest that reaches right below her bosom. Her ankles and almost all of her feet are covered with a type of black brace. She wears a black belt with two containment bags attached.

#### *5.1.3.2 Nick Wilde*

Nick Wilde is a red fox who has large, green eyes, a slim body, and walks on two feet. He wears beige jeans, a green, short sleeved shirt, and a red and blue tie. His eyelids are halfway down for most of the film, which gives him an expression that implies that he is laidback and relaxed.

#### *5.1.3.3 Assistant Mayor Bellwether*

Assistant Mayor Bellwether is a white sheep who walks on two feet. She has large, green eyes, large, purple glasses, long ears hanging down, and a fuzzy bun of wool on the top of her head. She wears nice clothes that consists of a skirt, top, a blazer, and jewelry. She has approximately the same height as Judy.

#### *5.1.3.4 Supporting characters*

Chief Bogo is a muscular cape buffalo with large horns which makes his appearance intimidating. Mayor Lionheart is a lion that appears to have muscles as well. Both Chief Bogo and Mayor Lionheart have slim waists and broad shoulders. Officer Clawhauser is an overweight cheetah. Flash is a sloth and Mr. Big is a small mouse. Both Flash and Mr. Big have contrasting names to their physical appearances.

### **5.1.4 Summary of physical appearances**

The two tables below display several common physical attributes applied to represent the female and the male characters. The female characters have large eyes, slim waists, and long hair or ears. The three human characters, Belle, Rapunzel and Mother Gothel, are all Caucasian, wear dresses, and have perfect teeth. The human male characters display many similar attributes. Gaston, the Beast and Flynn Rider, are all Caucasian, and have normal sized eyes, slim waists, broad shoulders, tall heights, muscles, and handsome appearances. They have similar clothing with jeans, shirts, and boots. These physical attributes enhance the

archetypal representation of a prince from the Disney Princess line. Nick Wilde on the other hand, has large eyes and a slim body. He does not resemble the three human characters through his anthropomorphized appearance. Zootopia is not a part of the Disney Princess line, which is apparent in Nick Wilde’s physical appearance. There are some contrasting features between Judy Hopps and the female characters from the Disney Princess line, however, she possesses several similar physical features. She has similar body shape, although she is a bunny, and abnormally large eyes. The main contrast between them is that she is an animal that wears jeans instead of a dress.

**Table 1 - Female characters:**

Belle (Beauty and the Beast)							
Protagonist	Caucasian	Brown hair, brown eyes	Perfect teeth	Slim waist, large eyes, flawless skin, long hair	Beautiful	Blue dress, white shirt, white apron	Matching outfit
↓							
Rapunzel (Tangled)							
Protagonist	Caucasian	Blond hair, green eyes	Round nose	Perfect teeth	Slim waist, large eyes, flawless skin, long hair	Beautiful	Pink and purple dress, barefoot
↓							
Mother Gothel (Tangled)							
Antagonist	Caucasian	Black hair, blue/grey eyes	Pointy nose	Perfect teeth	Slim waist, large eyes, flawless skin, long hair	Beautiful	Red dress, red nail polish
↓							
Judy Hopps (Zootopia)							
Protagonist	Anthropomorphized bunny	Grey and white fur, purple eyes		Slim waist, large eyes, long ears			Police uniform
↓							
Assistant Mayor Bellwether (Zootopia)							
Antagonist	Anthropomorphized sheep	White wool, green eyes, wears glasses		Slim waist, large eyes, long ears		Skirt, top, blazer, jewelry	Matching outfit

**Table 2 - Male characters:**

Gaston (Beauty and the Beast)								
Antagonist	Caucasian	Black hair, blue eyes	Perfect teeth, marked chin	Slim waist, broad shoulders	Tall, muscular	Handsome	Red t-shirt, black leggings & boots	Matching outfit
The Beast/the prince (Beauty and the Beast)								
Protagonist	Caucasian (when human)	Blue eyes, brown fur, fangs, claws, antlers, tale		Blond hair, perfect teeth	Large lips, slim waist, broad shoulders	Tall, muscular		Matching outfits
Flynn Rider/Eugene Fitzherbert (Tangled)								
Deuteronist	Caucasian	Brown hair, brown eyes	Perfect teeth	Slim waist, broad shoulders	Tall, muscular	Handsome	Brown jeans & boots, white shirt, blue vest	Matching outfit
Nick Wilde (Zootopia)								
Deuteronist	Anthropomorphized fox		Red fur, green eyes		Slim body, large eyes		Beige jeans, green shirt, red & blue tie	

## 5.2 Character traits

This subchapter presents how different semiotic resources are used to display the different characters' personalities and interests. The previous subchapter presented how their physical appearances are represented through embodied and auditory modes semiotic resources (Burn, 2013). The character traits are influenced by their physical appearances, which means that this subchapter is influenced by the findings in the previous subchapter. I will provide a background for the expectations that are present based on the discourses related to their role allocations and physical appearances (van Leeuwen, 2008). I will focus on the main characters, with input from some of the supporting characters.

### 5.2.1 Beauty and the Beast

#### 5.2.1.1 Belle

Belle is presented as a well-read girl who is usually seen with a book. Because of this, the townsfolk describe her as a funny girl who is peculiar and different from the rest of them. Her personality is therefore placed in contrast to the rest of the townsfolk. She does not fall for Gaston's seduction and does not appear interested in his description of the perfect life where she is married to him and takes care of their multiple children and dogs. She is domestic and takes care of the animals. This is also apparent through the apron she wears. She states that

she wants more than the small provincial life and appears curious. Her curiosity is presented through her desire to discover the forbidden West Wing in the castle although she has been denied access several times. She shows kindness and compassion towards everyone around her and takes care of the Beast's wounds despite of his snarling towards her. In addition, Belle talks back to the Beast which implies that she has guts as well. This is also present when she refuses Gaston's proposal, takes her father's place as the Beast's captive, stands up for her father, who is called a lunatic by the townsfolk, and defends the Beast. When she is attacked by wolves in the forest, she fights them off with a stick until the Beast comes for her rescue. Hence, her personality is expressed both through the embodied modes of dramatic action and speech, and the song "Belle" expresses how the townsfolk experience her through the auditory mode of music (Burn, 2013).

#### *5.2.1.2 Gaston*

Gaston is very focused on appearances, especially when it comes to his own. He claims that he wants to woo and marry Belle because of her beauty. It does not matter that she does not show an interest back, he still pursues to gain her hand. He is very determined to gain her affection and makes a deal with a man to get Maurice, Belle's father, thrown into the asylum unless Belle marries him. The combination of his physical attributes and speech through both tone and timbre (Burn, 2013) implies that he has power and is macho. He is a hunter with several antlers hanging on the wall to prove his hunting ability and someone who, according to his sidekick LeFou, does not miss any shot. In the song "Gaston", LeFou sings that everyone wants to be like Gaston, and that no one has the same masculine abilities such as fighting and shooting as him. Hence, the song emphasizes the impression that he is masculine and powerful through the melody and rhythm (Burn, 2013). Gaston is liked by all and considered as a catch. This is emphasized through three women who constantly tries to gain his affection.

#### *5.2.1.3 The Beast*

The Beast is not referred to by name, only as "a prince", "the Beast", "sir", or "master". This is what van Leeuwen (2008) refers to as a middle ground between nomination and categorization. He claims that this is common in stories for children, where the character is both nominated and categorized. The Beast is represented through his identity as a beast, thus nominated, and categorized by not being referred to by name (van Leeuwen, 2008). As a prince, the Beast had everything his heart desired, was spoiled, unkind, and selfish. His personality was the reason he was turned into a beast. He displays a lot of temper, both



against his trusted household staff and Belle. It appears that he has forgotten how it is to be a human with hygiene and basic table manners. However, Belle's presence turns his behavior from brute and animalistic to human. Furthermore, after Belle brings him back to the castle and takes care of his injuries, his behavior changes drastically. His temper is not as prevalent, he has better table manners, and he wears finer clothing. In addition, he does not appear as intimidating and acts gentle and kind towards Belle and the staff. He also acts selfless and releases Belle from his captivity so she can save her father although it might mean that the spell would not be broken. In the climax scene, Gaston tries to kill the Beast, and he does not fight back until Belle returns to the castle and calls for Gaston to stop. It appears that the Beast has given up, and only finds the will to fight for his life when he sees Belle. He chooses to save Gaston's life when he has the upper hand and is deadly injured because of it.

The three staff members are active in connecting and building the relationship between the Beast and Belle. Hence, they are contributors to the Beast's changing behavior, which develops his role allocation (van Leeuwen, 2008) from the relatively passivated captivator to a more activated individual who does not need the same amount of support from his staff when interacting with Belle. Their relationship develops simultaneously as his character development (Gee, 2014).

## ***5.2.2 Tangled***

### *5.2.2.1 Rapunzel*

Rapunzel is domestic and does all the household chores. This is clear in the opening song "When Will My Life Begin?" where Rapunzel sings all her daily chores and activities to keep her occupied. She is very creative and paints, knits, sews, makes candles, and plays guitar. The song implies that this is something she does every day, but that she is wondering when her life will begin because she is stuck in the same place as always. She is very curious and wants to see "the floating lights". When Mother Gothel claims that she is referring to the stars, Rapunzel responds that she has charted the stars, and these lights only appear on her birthday. She is clever, obedient, stubborn, and kind. The songs she sings support the notion that she is kind through the melodies, instrumentation, harmonies, and dynamics (Burn, 2013). Hence, the auditory modes influence the impression the viewers get of Rapunzel's personality. Although she has never been outside of the tower, she sees the best in people and values their qualities instead of being frightened by xenophobia. Flynn Rider tries to charm Rapunzel with his looks, but she does not fall for his smoldering look.

#### 5.2.2.2 *Mother Gothel*

Gothel is referred to as Mother Gothel after she kidnapped Rapunzel. Prior to the kidnapping she is merely referred to as Gothel. Thus, she is connected to two social practices which are opposites, motherhood and kidnapper. van Leeuwen (2008) refers to this as the subcategory of overdetermination called inversion of the social actor. She is obsessed with her young appearance. Her obsession is the reason why she kidnapped Rapunzel. When the Queen got ill, she hid the magical flower although the entire kingdom was searching for it to heal her. She failed, and the magical powers of the flower was transferred to Rapunzel in the womb. Gothel found out that Rapunzel's hair possessed the magical powers of the flower, but only when attached to her head. Hence, she kidnapped her in order to stay young, which displays how selfish she is.

Her obsession with youth is also displayed when she waits for Rapunzel to let down her hair so that she could be pulled up into the tower through saying "I'm not getting any younger down here." (Howard & Greno, 2010, 9:48). Furthermore, she manipulates Rapunzel to believe that the outside world is dangerous and that she should stay in the tower where she is safe. This is clear through the song "Mother Knows Best", where she claims that "You know why we stay up in this tower (...) to keep you safe and sound, dear." (Howard & Greno, 2010, 13:01). She does not look at Rapunzel when she sings this, instead she cuddles with her hair. This implies that she wants to keep Rapunzel's hair and its magical powers safe and sound, not necessarily Rapunzel. Through this song, it is also apparent that Gothel mocks and condescends Rapunzel, both directed towards her personality by claiming that she is naïve and not capable to take care of herself in the outside world and by claiming that she is "(...) getting kind of chubby." (Howard & Greno, 2010, 14:27). After she mocks Rapunzel, she always says that she is just teasing and that she loves her. Thus, suppressing the role allocation of Rapunzel by passivating her through the notion that she is powerless and incapable of taking care of herself (van Leeuwen, 2008). The language displays the relationship between them (Gee, 2014). In addition, Mother Gothel's personality is presented through a combination of embodied modes through her facial expressions, movements, clothing, and her speech and tone (Burn, 2013). The song "Mother Knows Best" emphasizes this representation through the auditory mode of music with its contrasting dramatic melody, harmony, and rhythm (Burn, 2013) in comparison to when Rapunzel sings. Hence, the music influences how viewers perceive her personality.

Although she kidnapped Rapunzel for her hair, continually mocks her, and calls her a pet, it appears that she cares for Rapunzel and has raised her as her own daughter. Rapunzel's many creative and domestic abilities implies that Gothel has taught it to her. She has also travelled three days' time to retrieve a special painting for Rapunzel, which indicates that she genuinely cares for her. Flynn Rider states that Mother Gothel raised Rapunzel "(...) as her own." (Howard & Greno, 2010, 04:12) in the opening scene, hence supporting the notion that she cares for her. Her contrasting behavior against Rapunzel emphasizes the inversion of her as a character (van Leeuwen, 2008).

### *5.2.2.3 Flynn Rider/Eugene Fitzherbert*

Flynn Rider is first presented as a selfish thief who tricks his companions and shows no regret as long as he gets his way. When he is captured by Rapunzel, he tries to win her over by charming her with his smolder. He is very focused on his own appearance, which is shown when he sees the Wanted poster and exclaims that "This is bad. This is very, very bad. This is really bad. They just can't get my nose right!" (Howard & Greno, 2010, 15:55). Hence implying that he does not care about the Wanted poster itself, rather the wrongful drawing of his nose. It almost appears that the posters are made this way in order to mock him, because his nose is always drawn incorrectly. He tries to manipulate Rapunzel into ending her search for the floating lights. His manipulation shows that he is clever because he convinces her that the inn called "The Snuggly Duckling" is one of the finest places to go to and that if she can not handle it, she should get back to the safe castle. Hence, he is exploiting her lack of knowledge of the outside world.

His behavior changes throughout and he opens up to Rapunzel after they almost drown. His original name is Eugene Fitzherbert, an orphan who wanted to be like a character he used to read to the smaller children at the orphanage, named Flynn Rider. Instead of trying to manipulate Rapunzel, he now shows compassion for her and provide her an excellent view of the lanterns through a boat on the water. They almost kiss on the boat, but he notices his previous co-thieves on the beach, and wants to clear his conscious by giving them the crown. Hence, it appears that he wants to do right by Rapunzel and be a better man than simply a thief. He also shows his cleverness when he figures out that Rapunzel is in danger and that Gothel is abusing her powers.

#### *5.2.2.4 Supporting characters*

The thugs at the inn are represented as vicious and mean, although they have entirely different hobbies which are contrasting of what vicious men would have, such as baking and collecting miniature unicorns. This is apparent through the song “I’ve Got a Dream” where they sing about what they want to be despite of their appearances. At first, they wanted to hand Flynn Rider over to the guards for the money reward, but they changed their minds because of Rapunzel and ended up with breaking him out of prison, thus saving him from being hanged at the end. Their actions both support the stereotypical representation of them as brutal and sadistic, and the contrasting anti-stereotypical representation through their kind actions and interests.

### *5.2.3 Zootopia*

#### *5.2.3.1 Judy Hopps*

Judy has always wanted to become a police officer, regardless of what other people told her. She was the first bunny to enter the police academy and became valedictorian of her class because of her hard work and great effort. She believes that everyone can be anything they want. This is clear both when she works extra hard at the police academy to become a police officer and when she first encounters Nick Wilde. She is very determined and stubborn. When she is assigned to parking duty, she makes it her mission to perform this job with excellence. She also takes on herself the mission of finding the missing otter, Emmet, within 48 hours with her own job on the line. She shows courage several times during the film, where the first courageous act is when she stands up for the bully, Gideon Grey, when he tries to steal their peer’s tickets. Judy is very smart and finds out that Nick is a fraud who works with his allegedly son to earn a lot of money. She tricks him into cooperating and help her to find Emmet and the other missing mammals, which they eventually do.

#### *5.2.3.2 Nick Wilde*

Nick Wilde is a sly con-artist who earns his living by tricking other mammals. He plays on people’s conscious through disguising his companion as his son in order to purchase a giant elephant ice cream. He melts and resells the ice cream in smaller popsicles to hamsters and the popsicle sticks as construction wood. He does not believe in Judy when she says that he can be anything one wants. When he was younger, he wanted to become a scout and join the Junior Ranger Scouts and his mother scraped together just enough money to buy him a brand-new uniform. He was the only predator there, and they mocked him and cuffed his mouth. After that day, he decided that if the other mammals would only see him as a sly fox, he

would live up to their expectations. Hence the hustling and arrogant manners. His behavior changes from being reluctant to help Judy and haltering her through introducing Flash to defending her against Chief Bogo, and eventually becoming the first fox police officer.

### ***5.3 Gender roles***

This subchapter presents how the genders are represented with support from the previous analysis of their physical appearances and character traits. The prevalent gender roles in Disney films are typically exhibited through masculine and feminine characteristics where the male character saves the helpless female character (England et al., 2011). Research has shown that children recognize the gender stereotyping in films and exhibit similar gendered expectations for themselves (England et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important to use gender roles as an entrance into promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom.

#### ***5.3.1 Beauty and the Beast***

Belle is considered as a puzzle to the townsfolk because of her interest in reading. They claim that she is distracted, dazed, funny, and peculiar. Gaston also claims that it is not suitable to read for a woman, because she might get some ideas. He is so determined to marry Belle that he arranged for their marriage before proposing. His proposal included the claim from Gaston that Belle's dreams involves a life with him, six to seven boys, and that she shall massage his feet at the end of the day when he gets home. When she declined, he exclaims that no one says no to him and that he has been disgraced and publicly humiliated. Belle's activated character is strengthened when she declines Gaston's proposal and hunt for her hand. It appears that he does not care whether if she wants to marry him or not, and that his interest in her is based on her embodied features rather than her personality.

The Beast's enchanted rose would bloom until his 21<sup>st</sup> year, and the spell would only be broken if he learned to love another and earn her love in return before the last petal fell. Hence, there is a focus on a heterophile relationship. In the song "Ge Our Guest", Lumiere states that it has been 10 years since they have had guests there. Thus, the Beast was 11 years old when he was transformed into a beast by the enchantress. Consequently, he had to begin his search for true love while he was still a child.

The Beast hopes that Belle might be the one to break the curse. Hence, they convince him to give her a proper room instead of a prison cell and invite her to dine with him. After both ordering and asking her more politely to dine with him, she still refuses. This makes him infuriated, and he says that if she does not dine with him, she does not dine at all. Their

relationship gradually evolves, especially after he frightens her out into the woods when she trespassed into the forbidden West Wing. This incident sparked something between them, which is emphasized by the household staff when they sing that there is something present there that was not there before in the song “Beauty and the Beast”.

Belle defends the Beast by announcing to the townsfolk that he might look viscous, but that he is kind, harmful, and her friend. She claims that it is Gaston that is the beast. She shows the Beast through the enchanted mirror, which results in that the townsfolk attack the castle to kill the Beast. It is only the men who attack the castle, while both the female and male household staff fights back. However, the only human characters who fight are displayed as male, thus creating the image that it is the men’s duty to fight while the women and children are left at home.

### ***5.3.2 Tangled***

When Flynn Rider climbs into Rapunzel’s hidden castle, she hits him several times with a frying pan and ties him up in a chair with her hair. He does not appear threatening against Rapunzel in any way other than that he broke into the castle. Hence, their relationship is originally built on violence and an ultimatum where Flynn Rider has to guide Rapunzel to the floating lights in order to retrieve his satchel.

Rapunzel saves Flynn several times. She stands up for him at the “The Snuggly Duckling”, thus saving him from a beat down. She also manages to rescue him with her hair when the guards are after him at the dam. When Maximus, the guard’s horse, finds them, Rapunzel makes a deal with him not to arrest Flynn for 24 hours so that he can guide her to the floating lights. The final save is when Flynn is stabbed, and she sacrifices herself to Gothel if she would let her save him with her hair’s healing power. Flynn tries to save Rapunzel by climbing into the tower when she is captured by Gothel and is stabbed in the prosses. When Rapunzel tries to save him, he cuts her hair to protect her from Gothel’s abuse despite his deadly wound. Hence, he sacrifices himself for Rapunzel.

### ***5.3.3 Zootopia***

The genders are presented somewhat equally. However, the two leading positions, the police chief and the mayor, are both male while the assistant is female which implies a traditional role allocation where the female character is passivated by the male character (van Leeuwen, 2008). The major difference lies in the different mammals and their assumed suitable profession. Judy saves Nick’s life several times.

I will compare the gender roles presented in the three films above in the following chapter. Furthermore, I will discuss how the gender roles are used to display relationships, and how the pupils can increase their critical literacy through viewing these representations. There has been some development in gender representation, however, there are still traditional gender roles prevalent.

## **6.0 Findings and discussion**

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from my analysis and reflect upon how they can be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom. I have chosen to include detailed descriptions of the semiotic resources applied to represent the characters' in my analysis because it is important that the pupils reflect upon the intricate ideologies that Disney animated films offer through their representations (Lugo-Lugo & Bloodsworth-Lugo, 2009; van-Wormer & Juby, 2016). I found that the semiotic resources applied to represent the characters displayed several stereotypes, and that there were several similar attributes used to represent them despite the different films. Neither of these films are labeled with a warning of the stereotypes present in these films in the streaming service Disney+ (Schild, 2020). Nonetheless, the analytical themes, physical appearances, character traits, and gender roles, work together to enhance stereotypical representations which I will discuss in this chapter. However, I will not address every stereotype that are included, rather a selected few to justify my arguments.

This chapter is divided into four subchapters to emphasize my analytical findings in correlation to the promotion of critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom. My findings display archetypical representations, exclusion of diversity, relatively traditional gender representations, and complex character relationships. In order to answer my research question, I will discuss relevant themes that are apt for promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom, not specific tasks for how this can be done. It is important that the pupils are provided with instructions of what they are expected to do while viewing the films because they do not automatically change their way of viewing at school (Villanueva, 2020). In the following subchapters, I will elaborate on my findings of how the characters are represented and the impact of the explicit and implicit meanings of these representations in relation to the Norwegian EFL classroom.

### ***6.1 Archetypical representations***

My findings indicate a trend where the female main characters are displayed with abnormally large eyes, slim waists, flawless skin, long hair, and beautiful features which are emphasized through several semiotic resources. The female main characters, Belle, Rapunzel, and Mother Gothel are represented with resembling appearances of a Barbie doll, which correlates to the archetypical Disney Princess features from the Disney Princess line (England et al., 2011; van-Wormer & Juby, 2016). These physical appearances are displayed in **Table 1** in my analysis. The Disney Princess line exhibit certain expectations of the characters' attributes, which influence how pupils view their idols and consequently themselves (England et al., 2011). These expectations appear to include other films than the Disney Princess line as well, which is shown through the two female anthropomorphized characters from *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016). Although Judy Hopps is a bunny and Assistant Mayor Bellwether is a sheep, they are represented with slim waists, large eyes, beautiful features, and long ears which resemble long hair. This indicates that the female characters in Disney animated films display archetypical standards of beauty.

The male main characters are displayed with slim waists, broad shoulders, muscular bodies, and handsome features which are emphasized several times in the films. The human male main characters in these two films, Gaston, the Beast as human, and Flynn Rider, display similar physical appearances, which aligns with the stereotypical Prince Charming. The supporting characters are displayed in a way that enhance how beautiful or handsome the main characters are, such as LeFou's appearance in comparison to Gaston's appearance. LeFou is displayed as short, chubby, large gaps between his teeth, and a big nose. These embodied modes contrast with Gaston, which increase Gaston's masculinity and handsomeness.

*Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991) promotes the physical appearances of the three main characters, especially in relation to their beauty. Belle's name even means beauty, hence referring to the film's title (Trousdale & Wise, 1991). I have described the characters in **Table 1** and **Table 2** as beautiful and handsome because that is how they are described in the films. The requirements for being beautiful or handsome is not explicitly expressed. However, there are both explicit and implicit focus on beauty standards apparent in the three films, which is shown through the semiotic resources applied to represent the characters in specific ways, regardless of what species they are which is displayed in **Table 1** and **Table 2**.



Although the characters in *Zootopia* seem less concerned about their appearance, they are represented with similar attributes as the characters from the two other films where there is an explicit focus on how attractive they are, such as Gaston, Flynn Rider, and Mother Gothel. Officer Clawhauser from *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016), is presented as a stereotypical American cop who is overweight with a love for donuts. Hence, the filmmakers have chosen to use semiotic resources to enhance the stereotypical representation of how cops.

Mother Gothel's obsession with youth can also influence how pupils perceive aging and beauty. She can not stand to look at herself when she is old and wrinkled, thus increasing the need for a flawless appearance. There are not any other older characters represented in this film. The lack of portrayal of older characters and Mother Gothel's obsession enhance the notion that aging is something negative and does not correlate with the beauty standards in the film (Zurcher & Robinson, 2018). Therefore, it is important that pupils view these films critically by exploring the multiple perspectives and ulterior motives through understanding that the films are positioned and tries to position them as viewers (Ciardiello, 2004; Fajardo, 2015; Janks, 2018). It is difficult to measure stereotypes regarding beauty because the criteria have to be specified. The internalization of sociocultural standards of beauty can be considered as idealized and unachievable, thus leading to body shame, anxiety, and eating disorders (Moradi et al., 2005).

It is important to ask reflective questions regarding what beauty standards are and who defines these standards with pupils in the Norwegian EFL classroom. Teenagers are impressionable, and I believe that the enormous media exposure and globalization today make them even more impressionable because they try to live up to the image that their peers and other people create which is only half the story (Hall, 1997; Kress, 2010). Consequently, it is important to critically reflect upon the semiotic resources applied to represent the characters in specific ways. The focus on physical appearances in these three films must be viewed critically in the EFL classroom, so that pupils can read against the texts and understand that the beauty standards presented in Disney are unrealistic and can influence how they perceive their own physical appearances (Janks, 2019; Lacroix, 2004; Moradi et al., 2005). The curriculum emphasizes the importance of increasing the pupils' critical literacy so that they can develop good judgement and competence that promotes sound physical and mental health (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Exploring the influential aspect of archetypical and stereotypical representations in these Disney animated films is one way of promoting their critical literacy.

## ***6.2 The exclusion of diversity***

The characters in *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991) and *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010) are all Caucasian and presented as heterosexual. Heterosexuality is also the mainstream sexuality in *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016), although it is not as explicitly focused on in this film. The remaking of *Beauty and the Beast* (Condon, 2017) displays increased diversity in their character representations. LeFou is displayed as homosexual with an obvious crush on Gaston, and there are multiple ethnicities included. However, there are not any apparent homosexual relationships other than LeFou's crush, and the main characters are still Caucasian and heterosexual. Hence, it is only the supporting characters that display diversity, which backgrounds them and passivates their role allocation (van Leeuwen, 2008). According to van Leeuwen (2008), "Representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended." (p. 28). Hence, "(...) what is visually produced, by the practices of representation, is only half the story." (Hall, 1997, p. 263).

Today's society demands inclusion of diversity in different types of media. This is shown through praise or scrutiny of how characters or people are displayed (Molvik, 2018). Hence, it is important that different types of media include multiple diversities which can function as windows to the world. However, it does not serve the intentional purpose of including multiple diversities if they are suppressed or backgrounded and not provided essential roles (Müller-Hartmann, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2008). Through suppressing or backgrounding the characters, the inclusion of diversity rather excludes them through stereotypical representations (van Leeuwen, 2008). Filmmakers might appear to be "politically correct" through their inclusion of multiple diversities, however, it is rather an inequality of power if the diverse characters are not given an essential role to the story (Hall, 1997). The inclusion then becomes stereotyping which "(...) reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics." (Hall, 1997, p. 257). Hence increasing the "us and them" declaration instead of displaying diversity (Risager, 2020).

By enhancing stereotypes, the films weaken the opportunity for pupils to increase their intercultural competence. Films, like textbooks, can influence how pupils experience other cultures (Risager, 2020). In order to do this, films must include several cultures and diversity. The power of films can influence the viewers' attitudes towards themselves and others, which is why their status as cultural products must be critically examined (Giroux, 2011). These three Disney animated films do not explicitly include multiple diversities or cultures.

However, through critically exploring the stereotypical representations and reflect upon what characters that have been included or possibly excluded, pupils can develop their critical literacy skillset and increase their intercultural competence (Huber et al., 2014; van Leeuwen, 2008).

### ***6.3 Gender representations***

The three films display a development in gender representation, which align with findings from previous scholars who claim that the Disney films exhibit more androgenous gender representations through their masculine and feminine characteristics and number of saves (England et al., 2011; Hine et al., 2018). Flynn Rider displays more feminine behavior in comparison to Gaston and the Beast and is saved by Rapunzel several times throughout the film. The thugs at the inn are represented with the stereotypical physical appearances of villains, however, their character traits do not correlate to this representation. Their interest can be labeled as more feminine than masculine, which supports the notion that the male characters display more feminine behavior in more recent films (Hine et al., 2018).

Both Belle and Rapunzel are domestic, which suits the traditional and stereotypical female role in Disney films (England et al., 2011). Furthermore, Belle is described as a peculiar and funny girl who differ from the rest of the townsfolk because of her interest in reading. Hence, the film emphasizes that the female gender role involves marriage and staying home with the kids. Judy Hopps differs from the traditionally domestic female gender role such as Belle and Rapunzel. She proceeds her dream of becoming a police officer regardless of the obstacles she encounters based on her mammal species. However, the traditional gender roles are still prevalent through the gendered stereotypes and behaviors (Hine et al., 2018). According to DelRosso (2015), Mother Gothel is represented as a gender stereotype when it comes to her ageist oppression and constant need for youth through the magical flower, Rapunzel. This indicates that the female gender stereotype is obsessed with her physical appearances. The gender roles present in the three films reinforce societal stereotypes that must be viewed critically in the EFL classroom because they function as windows to the world for pupils (Bazzini et al., 2010; Müller-Hartmann, 2007).

### ***6.4 Relationships***

Viewing the relationships presented in Disney animated films can influence pupils' beliefs and assumptions of how relationships should be. Hence, it is important for pupils to view how the relationships are represented in the EFL classroom through reflecting upon how the

competing messages and implicit information influence and position them as consumers (Hall, 1998; Janks, 2019). The male characters in these three films are first displayed as selfish, manipulative, vicious, a con-artist, and a thief. However, all, except Gaston, have a dynamic character that becomes compassionate, kind, gentle, and caring. The relationship between Belle and the Beast is based on her captivation by him which progresses to love. The relationship between Rapunzel and Flynn Rider develops from an ultimatum from Rapunzel after she has beaten him with a frying pan. The relationship between Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde begins when she tricks him into cooperating with her. Neither of the characters fall in love instantly, and in the latest film, *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016), there is not a romantic resolution between the main characters. However, the relationships presented in these films complex and mainly built from inequality of power.

As my findings indicate, the relationship between Belle and the Beast is rather complex. Reading with the text (Janks, 2019), Belle as an independent and strong woman who fell in love against all odds. However, as my analysis have shown, she is actually the Beast's prisoner. Hence, I find their relationship rather oddly presented, because I believe that it romanticizes the Stockholm syndrome instead of true love. This is supported by Towbin et al. (2004) in their study where they argue that the Stockholm syndrome is apparent in *Beauty and the Beast*.

From *Beauty*, children learn that it is acceptable for men to abuse women. They learn that if women tolerate the abuse and continue to love him despite his abuse, she will eventually be able to change him into a loving partner. (p. 36)

The Stockholm Syndrome is also apparent in the relationship between Rapunzel and Mother Gothel. Mother Gothel is both a mother figure and the kidnapper of Rapunzel, which I explained as an inversion of her as a character (van Leeuwen, 2008). Although she condescends and mocks Rapunzel, she still displays affectionate behavior against her. Hence, she is abusing Rapunzel and takes advantage of her lack of knowledge of the outside world. Mother Gothel's abuse and emotional restraints of Rapunzel makes her resemble the stereotypical and traditional fairytale stepmother (DelRosso, 2015).

According to Hall (1998), a "(...) dialectic relationship exists between literacy and consciousness." (p. 188). Therefore, pupils' previous discourses, their primary and horizontal discourses could be developed into secondary and vertical discourse through viewing the

representations of relationships presented in these three Disney animated films critically (Olin-Scheller & Tengberg, 2017).

## **7.0 Concluding remarks**

Through aspects from multimodal analysis (Burn, 2013) and CDA (van Leeuwen, 2008), I have explored how the three films *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991), *Tangled* (Howard & Greno, 2010), and *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016) can be used to promote critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom. I focused my analysis on the analytical themes physical appearances, character traits, and gender roles. In addition, I compared and contrasted these films through the analytical themes. My analysis displayed that the characters display archetypical and stereotypical representations, exclusion of diversity, relatively traditional gender representations, and complex character relationships. In the **Findings and discussion** chapter, I answered my research question by discussing and reflecting upon how these films can be used to promote critical literacy in the Norwegian EFL classroom.

My findings show that an interrogation of the characters' representation is pertinent for reflecting upon the ulterior motives in Disney animated films (Ciardiello, 2004). Hence, they are apt for promoting critical literacy skills in the EFL classroom because they create an opportunity for reflection upon social constructions through a media that they are familiar with (Barbre, 2019). Pupils are accustomed to viewing films and multimodal representations from an early age, however, they need to be taught the ability to view these multimodal representations critically (Lim & Tan, 2018).

Films are commonly used in the EFL classroom, but rarely for critical purposes (Bakken, 2016). However, scholars such as Brown and Habegger-Conti (2017) and Giroux (2011) express the need for implementing critical literacy through multimodal representations in the EFL classroom because they create a cultural gap between the academic discourse of the classroom and the social issues present in society. Furthermore, the subject curriculum of English emphasizes that pupils should read, interpret, critically reflect on, and assess different types of texts, which includes films (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020a; 2020b). Films are a large part of pupils' lives from an early age, which is why they should be considered as "teaching machines" (Giroux, 1994, p. 50) instead of mere entertainment. This master's thesis contributes towards implementing the critical use of films in schools by theoretically demonstrating how critical literacy can be used in the Norwegian EFL classroom through three Disney animated films.

There has been a development in how Disney present their characters in recent films, however, there are still stereotypical and archetypical representations of physical appearances, character traits, and gender roles which I have displayed through my analysis and discussion (England et al., 2011; Hine et al., 2018). Although the characters in these films are displayed as different species, they still exhibit similar physical appearances and personalities. It appears that Disney animated films consist of archetypical standards of beauty that are unachievable for pupils to accomplish, such as the abnormally large eyes used to represent the female characters. Hence, it is important that pupils critically reflect upon the representations and understand that films are positioned and try to position the consumers (Brown & Habegger-Conti, 2017; Janks, 2018). Hence, Disney animated films can be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom through exploring how the characters are represented and the implicit meanings behind these representations.

### **8.0 Limitations and implications**

I have provided examples of how my findings can be used in the lower secondary school, without concrete examples of the pupils' learning outcome. Hence, my conclusive remarks are limited to the theoretical implications of how the three films can be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, I have not created a finished plan for how teachers should conduct their teaching of critical literacy through these films, rather examples of aspects that could be used to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom. This is because I believe that every teacher is different, which influence how they would want to use this material in the EFL classroom suited to themselves and their pupils. However, I have provided the theoretical background for the aspects of the three Disney animated films that are particularly apt for promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom. Due to my theoretical research, I have had room to include a very detailed analysis of three films instead of perhaps being forced to choose one film which strengthens this research.

This master's thesis demonstrates that the three Disney animated films are apt for promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom through focusing on character representations. My research implies that there are several aspects of Disney animated films that must be viewed critically. I have focused my analysis on their physical appearances, character traits, gender roles, and contrasts. However, there are multiple other entrances into exploring these films' aptness for promoting critical literacy in the EFL classroom. I have focused on the main characters, with input from the most central supporting characters. However, it would be interesting to focus more explicitly on the cast and discover what characters that are

suppressed or backgrounded, or other aspects of the films such as the storyline itself. Furthermore, it would be very interesting to see how pupils respond to the promotion of critical literacy through these films through a classroom-based research.

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