Culture in Focus

A Critical Study of Culture in the English Syllabi
and a Few Selected Textbooks

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This essay examines how aesthetic and anthropologic culture is represented in a few selected textbooks for English and to what degree these representations correspond to the aims of the English course syllabi. Regarding aesthetic culture, the emphasis in the syllabi is on the students using literature as means to an end, mainly to develop certain skills such as an understanding of the English language, or learning about anthropologic culture through aesthetic culture. The aesthetic values of literature as an art form are not promoted or encouraged at all. The selected textbooks correspond to the syllabi on this matter. Concerning anthropologic culture, the emphasis in the syllabi is on ‘difference’. Other cultures are presented as strange and distant from us, and this is something that also can be seen in the selected textbooks. Moreover, in one of the textbooks the students are addressed as future tourists, potentially causing them to view other cultures and places as sights to see and sites to visit, instead of as having intrinsic value.

Keywords: aesthetic culture, anthropologic culture, textbooks, teaching, English, syllabus
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1. Introduction

Since the onset of globalisation during the second half of the 20th century and with the technical advancements achieved in the post-modern era, the world has changed greatly. What were once alien, exotic cultures and peoples on the other side of the world can now be experienced within a day’s journey, or communicated with directly from our homes via newer forms of media and technology such as e.g. the Internet and live video streaming. Even so, it is still the Swedish school system’s task to teach its students of English not only the language itself, but also to educate them about the broad array of cultures that exist within the different countries whose common denominator is the English language. The Swedish curriculum, *Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system* (Lpf94), states that “[t]he school shall strive to ensure that all pupils […] understand and respect other people and cultures” (14, my italics). Furthermore, the Swedish syllabus for the subject of English at upper secondary level mentions the term ‘culture’ multiple times:

**Aim of the subject […]**

The subject [of English] has […] the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures. […]

**Goals to aim for**

The school in its teaching of English should aim to ensure that pupils: […]

improve their ability to read with good understanding literature in English and reflect over texts from different perspectives, […]

reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures […]

**Structure and nature of the subject […]**

The ability to reflect over similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries is developed continuously, and leads eventually to an understanding of different cultures and inter-cultural competence.

(my italics)

Since culture, in the sense of traditions and ways of living, is mentioned under all three headings in the syllabus it must clearly be of importance; this has been pointed out in many other theses. Culture can also be of the aesthetic kind, such as literature or music, which Andersson et al. point out in *Skolan och de kulturella förändringarna* (98). As you can see in the quote above, this type of culture is also mentioned in the syllabi although it is not explicitly referred to as such in the same way.
However, what is not included in neither the curriculum for upper secondary school and adult education, nor in the syllabus for English, is a definition or discussion of culture as a concept (definitions of the term can be found in section 1.1 of this essay). The readers of these two documents (teachers, students and others such as e.g. textbook authors) are left with the somewhat daunting task to interpret the term themselves. The fact that the syllabi lack a discussion about culture has implications for the school system that has to adhere to these documents and thus also for the discourse of culture in the educational context. It is not only the teachers who must ensure that their work adheres to the curriculum, but to do this is also in the interest of the authors of the textbooks that are used by the teachers. It would not be possible for teachers to base their teaching on a textbook that goes against the curricula and syllabi. Therefore, it is important to also analyze textbooks and their content. In my experience, when it comes to the subject of English in Sweden, teachers often rely on textbooks to a large extent. This is something that is confirmed in a recent report by the Swedish National Agency for Education. In *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen*, it says that three out of four teachers that participated in the survey use a textbook for almost every lesson they teach (91). The report points out that the use of textbooks may prevent students from working independently, and working independently is one of the goals of the *Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system* (94). *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen* is centred on compulsory school, but based on my own experience I find the results pertinent and applicable also to upper secondary school in Sweden.

As teachers obviously rely heavily on textbooks in their work, critical analyses of the content of textbooks are much needed, even more so due to the fact that the state-run Swedish institution for textbook reviews ceased to exist in 1991. The Swedish National Agency for Education is responsible for reviewing and evaluating Swedish education, but it does not explicitly review textbooks (Långström 201). The reviewing of textbooks is now something that, to a large extent, is supposed to be carried out locally by the Swedish municipalities (Selander et al. 34). Since it is in the interest of authors of textbooks to adhere to the curricula and syllabi regarding the content of their works, it is therefore likely that they have read and interpreted these documents prior to compiling and selecting the material for the books they have written. Despite this, no textbooks that I have seen contain any discussion at all about the implications and results of the authors’ subjective interpretations of the terms and concepts in
the curriculum and syllabi, nor do they contain a discussion about the values promoted in the text. This might not be very surprising, seeing as the curricula and syllabi do not contain a discussion about these terms either. With this as a background, it becomes evident why it is of great interest to examine how culture(s) in English-speaking countries are presented and represented in the syllabi and textbooks for students who study English at upper secondary school level in Sweden. In this paper I intend to analyze and discuss some interesting and problematic issues concerning the term ‘culture’. I will examine how it is used and described in the syllabi for English at upper secondary level, as well as in a few selected textbooks.

1.1 Previous research

In recent years there have been several dissertations written about culture in the context of syllabi, curricula and language teaching in Swedish schools. The focus has been on anthropologic culture. Three of the most influential ones include *Om språkundervisning i mellanrummet - och talet om "kommunikation" och "kultur" i kursplaner och läromedel från 1962 till 2000* by Ulrika Tornberg, *Interkulturell förståelse i engelskundervisning – en möjlighet* by Ulla Lundgren and *Kultur i språkundervisning - med fokus på engelska* by Eva Gagnestam. Tornberg focuses on how the terms of culture and communication are used in the Swedish curricula, syllabi and some textbooks used for teaching in Swedish schools, also with a historical perspective (3). Her main argument is that in present multicultural Swedish society, foreign language education in schools “with emphasis on “communication” and “culture” [is a perfect tool for] identity formation and democracy” (3). Lundgren’s dissertation is focused on culture and the English subject in compulsory school in Sweden. However, her conclusion that the cultural aspect of English education often is centred on Britain and the US is valid for all stages of English education. Her dissertation focuses on the teachers and their discourse concerning intercultural understanding in the classroom. The third dissertation by Gagnestam contains a broad analysis of different perspectives on culture in relation to the subject of English taught at upper secondary schools in Sweden. One of the author’s conclusions is that many teachers feel confused about how to conduct (and what to include in) their teaching when it comes to English-speaking cultures. The fact that teachers are unsure of what to teach their students further supports the relevance of examining how these cultures are presented and represented to the students in the textbooks that are used.
What these three recent dissertations on culture and language teaching have in common is that they do not contain any extensive analyses of textbooks. Textbooks and textbook authors are mentioned as a perspective to analyze (see e.g. Lundgren 265), but the scope is mainly limited to curricula and classroom interaction; teaching in action, as it were. However, as many teachers use textbooks as a basis for their teaching, the content of these books could direct classroom activities. Discussions may take place based on a certain chapter of the textbook, or a chapter may be assigned as homework to study and work with. Therefore, analyses of textbooks are of the utmost importance. What do textbooks actually say about culture?

An example of a study that analyzes textbooks for different subjects and how foreign cultures are presented in them is *Afrikabilde för partnerskap?: Afrika i de svenska skolböckerna* by Mai Palmberg. In her book, Palmberg analyzes how Social Science textbooks discuss Africa in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Concerning the views on culture as expressed in the textbooks analyzed in her study, she writes that many representations of culture reaffirm the notion that some aspects of cultures never change, and that it therefore is easy to define what is Swedish and what is non-Swedish (188).

A recent essay that examines the construction of ‘others’ as an obstacle for an intercultural perspective in Swedish textbooks for English language teaching is an essay written by Swedish pre-service-teacher Ann-Jeanett Stål; *Interkulturellt synsätt i konflikt med konstruktionen av “De andra”*. In her essay, she uses a postcolonial theoretical framework inspired by Edward Said in order to analyze how ‘the others’ are described in some English textbooks. Her conclusion is that the English textbooks she has examined tend to describe the English white cultures such as the UK and the US as ‘us’, whereas other more exotic English-speaking cultures are described as ‘the others’. This essay affirms the conclusions drawn by other researchers such as Palmberg, about textbooks of subjects other than English.

When it comes to aesthetic culture and its role in English education, the research is mainly focused on literature. One of the most influential researchers, whose work will be important to this paper, is Louise Rosenblatt. In her book, *Literature as Exploration*, she brings up two different ways of reading called aesthetic and efferent reading. These two terms will be defined and discussed in the following section in relation to defining aesthetic culture.
1.1.1 Defining culture

In order to examine how culture in English-speaking countries is presented and represented, one must first try to establish what ‘culture’ is. To come to a single neat definition turned out to be an impossible task; something which also Gagnestam experienced when writing her dissertation (13). The definition elaborated on below is the one that I find the most useful in order to achieve the aim of this paper. I am fully aware of the fact that there are many other ways to define culture but as one single definition is impossible, a choice must be made. My chosen definition encompasses aspects of culture that the curriculum and syllabi for upper secondary school bring up explicitly and implicitly, and that is why I will use this definition as a starting point. My choice does not mean that this is a ‘better’ or ‘more correct’ way to define the concept of culture.

There is a variety of terms relating to culture, and they are useful in different contexts. Andersson et al. state that culture is one of the most complex words that exist and that it therefore is not strange that the word is used in many different ways that often contradict each other (92). They differentiate between two different spheres of culture. The first one is called aesthetic culture. This sphere encompasses traditional art forms such as literature, drama, film, music or painting (Andersson et al. 98).

In the syllabi for English (and consequently also in textbooks) the emphasis regarding aesthetic culture is on literature. In this paper I will thus analyze how literature is used and interpreted. As mentioned at the end of the previous section, Rosenblatt describes two ways of reading literature in her book. She calls them aesthetic and efferent reading. Efferent reading is a type of reading where one, for example, searches for answers to factual questions. By searching for answers, the reader only focuses on the more shallow meaning of the text, rather than on underlying ideas or personal feelings about the text (Rosenblatt 292-293). The opposite of efferent reading is aesthetic reading, which means that you focus on the aesthetic aspects such as the activation of ideas or personal feelings. Thus, aesthetic reading does not necessarily have to be restricted to pointing out different writing techniques or literary features like metaphors or rhyme patterns. If one is reading aesthetically, one is not reading in order to search for answers to factual questions (Rosenblatt 292). Rosenblatt argues that when given a set of factual questions prior to reading, students will focus on finding the answers to the questions rather than on the aesthetic experience (293). As an extended interpretation of
aesthetic and efferent reading, one could use these two perspectives when analysing how to view aesthetic culture and art in general. Aesthetic reading could then be comparable to the philosophy of aestheticism, which Aatos Ojala defines in his book *Aestheticism and Oscar Wilde*. Ojala writes that aestheticism represents a value consciousness where aesthetic values prevail over all others, from moral to material ones. [...] Aesthetic values are intrinsic values [...] and [end] in themselves. This kind of value consciousness forms the philosophical basis of the movement, known in history under the slogan which well indicates its pursuits: *l’art pour l’art*, “art for art’s sake”

(13)

This means that art should never have a purpose except to be beautiful, much like the aesthetic reading Rosenblatt describes in her book. To summarize the discussion about aesthetic culture, one could say that advocates of aestheticism and aesthetic reading perceive aesthetic culture as a *goal in itself* with intrinsic values, whereas advocates of efferent reading and the opinion that art can be used in order to learn something perceives aesthetic culture as a *means to an end*.

The aesthetic definition of culture described above is a common one, but to solely use this definition of culture restricts the term to mean that culture is something that does not exist inside the school, but rather is something teachers have to bring into the school through the works of authors, actors or painters (Andersson et al. 98). According to Andersson et al., one can also include the second, wider cultural sphere of anthropologic culture. This encompasses the way of life and the way social life is organized. In this sense, culture is not only something that is taught in schools, but school itself is a form of culture (98). This second definition, too, can be further divided into subspheres. In *Crosscultural Understanding*, L. G. Robinson presents two perspectives on culture; either as “behaviour and product” (8), or as “process” (10). These two perspectives can, in turn, be divided into two definitions each. The culture as a product-perspective is divided into a behaviouristic and a functionalistic definition, whereas the culture as a process-perspective is divided into a cognitive and a symbolic definition.

Culture as a product by a behaviouristic definition means that culture is understood as being actions that can be observed with one’s eyes. Culture is something humans share with each other such as traditions, habits or customs. The emphasis is on how, rather than why people do something a specific way. *Why* something is done a certain way is instead the focus
of interest for someone who uses a functionalistic definition of culture as a product. For example, an outside observer such as a researcher could attempt to explain behaviour and the social rules for it. The rules and reasons are not tangible and cannot be seen with the naked eye, but through the observations one may be able to explain them (Robinson 8-9).

The view of culture as a process is more abstract than the view of culture as a product and less common in a language teaching context according to Robinson (12). From this perspective, culture is not something material. The first definition of culture as a process, the cognitive one, means that culture is compared to a computer program in which ‘culture’ would be the mechanism that sorts and interprets an individual’s experiences. The program is different in different cultures, and it can be altered during the course of a lifetime. As a contrast to this, the final symbolic definition of culture as a process focuses on the result of the dialectic\(^1\) process between the external events that can be observed visually and the internal program that sorts and interprets an individual’s experiences (10-12). Cultural understanding then becomes “an ongoing, dynamic process” (Robinson 12).

The above discussion of culture (and thus my understanding and interpretation of the term for the purpose of the analytical framework of this paper) is summarized in the schematic below:

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\(^1\) Dialectics refers to a “systematic reasoning, exposition, or argument that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).
The schematic shows a complete model, but in this paper I will only use the definitions that apply to the way culture is interpreted and discussed in the syllabi and the selected textbooks.

### 1.1.2 Pedagogical framework

As mentioned above, the Swedish curricula and syllabi are constructed in such a way that they give schools and teachers a lot of room for interpretation, but that also means they have a lot of responsibility when interpreting and realizing the goals and tasks stated therein. To problematize and discuss the terms used in these documents is therefore imperative (Lundgren 28). That starting point adds a pedagogical theory dimension, which in *The International Encyclopedia of Education* is referred to as “the theory of […] education and content” (Husén and Postlethwaite 1289). In *Didaktik – teori, reflektion och praktik*, Michael Uljens writes that pedagogical theory can examine a wide range of questions such as e.g. *what* one learns, *how* one learns something and *why* one learns something (17). This paper will mainly be concerned with the *what* and *why* questions, as it examines *what* is brought up about English-speaking cultures in teaching materials. This is done in the light of the Swedish curriculum and syllabi for English that decide *why* students must be taught about English-speaking cultures. Textbooks and syllabi are tangible examples of something that concerns the *what* and *why* questions.

Knowledge and the content of textbooks are never free of values, something that Kjell Härenstam discusses in depth in his book *Kan du höra vindhästen? Religionsdidaktik – om konsten att välja kunskap*. Härenstam argues that no knowledge about the topic of culture is free of values and that a major problem is the lack of transparency concerning the underlying values behind the selection of knowledge; underlying values that often conflict with the values promoted by the curriculum (6). Härenstam writes that a selection of content always is made by the authors, and that that selection always is based on values concerning what is and is not important. What is commonly referred to as “fact” contains human interpretations on which, according to Härenstam, values have a great impact (119).

I find Härenstam’s observations to be applicable also to syllabi and textbooks for the subject of English that discuss cultures of English-speaking countries. As already mentioned, the authors of these textbooks must have interpreted the curriculum, the syllabi and the term culture, and then made a selection of what content should represent ‘culture’ in the different
English-speaking countries. Authors of textbooks and syllabi completely neglect to discuss (or even indicate an awareness of) the impact of their own vantage point when overlooking the field of research and knowledge. They also do not discuss how that vantage point influences what they find relevant to bring up in the texts. This lack of discussion could potentially lead to an unintentional conveyance of negative, stereotypical and even racist perceptions of foreign cultures and peoples (as e.g. Palmberg’s work shows).

1.2 Aim and scope
This paper will examine how the term ‘culture’ is interpreted and used by looking at how it is brought up in the textbooks as a result of the authors’ interpretations of the syllabi. I will analyze how aesthetic and anthropologic culture is presented and represented both in English course syllabi and textbooks. Due to the restricted amount of time and writing space, the scope of this paper is limited to the syllabi and a selection of textbooks. Thus it is important for the reader to bear in mind that the conclusions of this paper must not be interpreted as representative for any school in Sweden nor on a national level. I do not claim to provide a complete analysis of all the ways culture is included in teaching; I will focus solely on the selected textbooks. Potential areas of interest for further research not covered in this paper will be mentioned in the conclusions.

1.2.1 Research question
- How are aesthetic and anthropologic cultures represented in a few selected textbooks in English and to what degree do these representations correspond to the aims of the English course syllabi?

2. Material
The material used for this paper is composed of many different types of secondary sources as the scope spans over different areas. The secondary source material consists mainly of texts discussing the concept of culture, some of which have a postcolonial approach. For the aesthetic culture discussion I have used Rosenblatt’s theory about aesthetic and efferent reading, as well as Ojala’s definition of aestheticism. Concerning the discussion of the
relationship between literary studies and anthropologic culture, I will refer to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and her work *Death of a Discipline* which discusses this issue. This material is necessary in order to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of how culture is presented and represented in the selected textbooks and syllabi for English.

The analyzed textbooks are *Read & Log On* (2006) by Cecilia Augutis et al., *Read & Proceed* (2003) by Håkan Plith et al., and *In the English-speaking World* (2003), edited by Carol Goodwright et al. The first two textbooks are ordinary course books with texts and accompanying glossaries, grammar sections and listening exercises. The chapters in *Read & Log On* (English course A) and *Read & Proceed* (English course B) are each centred on a specific theme to which accompanying novel excerpts correspond. Furthermore, each chapter in these two textbooks also has a section on life, institutions and social backgrounds in English-speaking countries. The third textbook, *In the English-speaking World*, is a book specifically on this topic. It contains 20 chapters on different English-speaking countries. The chapters each deal with different regions and countries. Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand each have their own chapter and so do most of the Asian English-speaking countries, but Africa is split up into east and west Africa, whereas the country South Africa has its own chapter. Each chapter is, according to the back cover of the book, written by someone from the region or country in question. The textbook also contains twelve excerpts from novels written by famous English-speaking authors. During my internship as a pre-service teacher, this textbook was mainly used by students in the English B course. Seeing as this book is intended to specifically teach students about life and culture in English-speaking countries, it is particularly interesting to analyze.

3. Approach and method

This paper is a hybrid of culture studies, literature studies and textbook studies. It contains both theories on culture and an analysis of how the concept of culture is used, literary theory in the shape of postcolonial theory, as well as an analysis of the English course syllabi and textbooks. The starting point is in pedagogical theory and curriculum theory. By combining several fields of research in the theoretical framework, the analysis of how culture is presented and represented in the syllabi and textbooks will have a broader foundation. This, in turn, will
increase its credibility. I would also like to point out that I will not be doing a complete analysis of the selected textbooks and the syllabi. I will only focus on some relevant and problematic issues in these texts that are of interest for the scope of this paper. Thus I will not in any way be evaluating how well students might learn English from using these textbooks.

The most difficult hurdle I have had to overcome in writing this paper is in fact the very reason for it being written: the complexity of culture. In order to tackle this problem I looked at how other researchers such as Gagnestam have approached this topic, both in a school/language teaching research context but also within other fields of research such as postcolonial theory. As stated in section 1.1, it is not so much a matter of finding one single definition of the term as it is a matter of discussing it, analyzing it, and then choosing an interpretation that best matches the analytical task at hand. It is of the utmost importance to be as transparent as possible about this choice so that the analysis will be credible.

I am not exempt from being affected by my culture and, by extension, my own understanding of the world is naturally affected by it as well. This is something to bear in mind both for myself as a researcher, but also for the readers of this paper. However, qualitative research is interpretative, and not to be confused with e.g. quantitative research. Just like Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman write in *Designing Qualitative Research*, qualitative research is “pragmatic, interpretative, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (2). Hence, it is clear that qualitative research cannot be objective nor aims to be.

The textbooks that are analyzed in this paper were chosen as it was easy to access most of this material due to my current internship at one of the schools where they are used. This choice is not to be understood as indicative of any specific perspective.

The emphasis will be on anthropologic culture as this aspect is the one given the most space in the syllabi and hence also in the textbooks. I will, of course, also be looking at aesthetic culture, but the analysis of the anthropologic culture will be given more space due to the emphasis on it in syllabi and textbooks. Moreover, I will solely analyze the syllabi and the textbooks. Unfortunately, there was not enough time provided to also include e.g. complementing interviews, questionnaires or classroom observations that might have been able to create a more complete (and possibly also different) picture of what students are taught about English-speaking cultures. Even so, this paper will add an important piece to the research puzzle regarding this topic.
4. Analysis
In this chapter I will discuss the three textbooks Read and Log On (RL), Read & Proceed (RP) and In the English-speaking World (ESW) and analyze what is written about culture. The theoretical framework that was introduced in section 1.1 will be used in this analysis. I will begin by discussing aesthetic cultural aspects, and continue with anthropologic cultural aspects after that.

4.1 Aesthetic culture
RL and RP are both designed in such a way that students are expected to read one or a few of the novels introduced in the chapters. This is explicitly stated in the introductory section for teachers and students that can be found on the first two pages of both RL and RP. With every excerpt there are then questions for students to discuss after having read the novel in question. They can be found at the end of each chapter under the heading “Work on the novel” in RL, and under the headings “Individual Work”/”Group Work” in RP.

ESW has a focus on literature as each chapter includes an excerpt from a novel connected to the country or region. However, the questions to work with after reading are connected to the excerpts rather than to the novel as a whole, and they are generally only intended to help the students check their comprehension of the excerpts.

4.1.1 Aesthetic culture and the syllabi
According to the syllabus for the English A course, one of the goals that all students should have attained on completion of the English A course is to “be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries” (The Swedish National Agency for Education, my italics). The syllabus for the English B course states that in order to obtain a pass in the course, students must be able to “describe different social conditions, cultural traditions, and ways of living in areas where English is spoken, and use this background to comment on and discuss literature, film and music” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). Thus, the criterion from the English course A has been reversed. This gives the impression that literature (aesthetic
culture) and anthropologic culture are interchangeable; you can use one to learn about the other.

What the first quote from the English A course syllabus actually says is that it is not only possible, but even a requirement, for students to use aesthetic culture in the form of literature as a means to learn about anthropologic culture from English-speaking countries. This is not something that is undisputed and accepted by literary researchers. For example, in her book, Rosenblatt problematizes the relationship between literature and other subjects such as psychology and sociology. She writes that “too often literature teachers feel that […] scattered reading on a subject here and there [is] ample preparation for using literature as the springboard for discussions of human nature and society” (20). This I fully agree with since I believe it would be dangerous to accept a work of fiction as a source of facts or scientific knowledge. Fiction springs from the imagination or personal experiences of the author, whereas science is expected to be based on facts and truth. However, Rosenblatt also argues that one should not view literature in purely an aesthetic or social context:

Although the social and aesthetic elements in literature may be theoretically distinguishable, they are actually inseparable. Much of the confused thinking about the aesthetic and the social aspects of art would be eliminated if the debaters realized that an object can have more than one value: it can yield the kind of fulfillment that we call aesthetic – it can be enjoyed in itself – and at the same time have a social origin and social effects.

I agree with Rosenblatt on that a work of art such as a novel can have a social origin and social effects, but I think it could be quite problematic to describe the social and aesthetic elements as inseparable. This could invite a reader to do exactly what she just cautioned against: using literature in a heedless manner as a starting point for discussions concerning topics of a sociological nature (such as e.g. culture). When juxtaposing Rosenblatt’s standpoint (that social and aesthetic elements are intertwined) to the thoughts of postcolonial critic Spivak, some similarities in their standpoints can be discerned. They both point out that there are upsides to combining the two fields of study. In her work Death of a Discipline, Spivak repeatedly refers to the potential benefits literary studies could gain from the social research field:
If we seek to supplement gender training and human rights intervention by expanding the scope of Comparative Literature, the proper study of literature may give us entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative.

However, she does not seem to share Rosenblatt’s opinion that the two fields are already merged or intertwined. Instead, Spivak highlights the benefits in combining the two, and a possibility to use literature studies as a way to examine how anthropological culture can manifest itself through a work of fiction. According to Spivak, this would speak against the view of “literary criticism as an end in itself” (6), while still preserving one of the best things about literary studies; “the skill of reading closely in the original” (ibid). Hence it would give literature studies a wider scope and purpose than the text alone. Even so, to use literature as a source of anthropologic cultural knowledge is not something that should be done carelessly. I already quoted Rosenblatt on this above, but also Spivak sees a potential danger in going about this incautiously as she likens human imagination (which is used when reading literature) to a “great inbuilt instrument of othering” (13). Therefore, I find the above discussion to support the conclusion that to do what the syllabi suggest and use aesthetic culture in the form of literature to learn about anthropologic culture and vice versa, could be problematic and should be done with great care, even though there are potential benefits to gain such as a wider purpose and use for literary studies.

4.1.2 Aesthetic culture in Read & Log On and Read & Proceed

The aesthetic culture forms that are brought up in RL and RP are literature and film. In RL, film is brought up in two of the chapters. The first instance is in chapter 4 which deals with Shakespeare and his famous play Romeo and Juliet. This chapter contains a section on three Shakespeare-related films; West Side Story (1961), William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (1996) and Shakespeare in Love (1998). The plot summaries are followed by a page with advice on how to write a film or play review. The points that students are told to bring up in the review are mainly focused on describing the plot, settings, music, names of actors and so forth (Augutis et al. 86). Only one or two points refer to themes or other more analytical issues, and none of the questions relate to the students on a personal level regarding ideas or feelings. Hence, the questions encourage an efferent stance towards the films.
There is a page in *RL* with advice on how to write a book review (154) that also encourages a more descriptive approach such as asking students to describe the characters, plot and settings. The same is the case with the questions to work with after having read the novel; they are mostly asking students to summarize or retell the story, rather than being more open-ended or analytical. Rosenblatt writes that “[e]very time a reader experiences a work of art, it is in a sense created anew” (107), and in my opinion the opportunity to have such an experience is very limited when we have some factual questions to answer while reading, thus creating an efferent reading experience for the student. As already mentioned in section 1.1.1, Rosenblatt argues that when given a set of factual questions prior to reading, students will focus on finding the answers to the questions rather than on the aesthetic experience (293). A task for students could for example be:

How is Colin’s cousin, Alistair, different from Colin? Describe Alistair and write a short presentation about him, pointing out these differences. Think about both how he looks like and how he behaves.

(Augutis et al 29)

This question is the complete opposite of being open-ended. Not only are the students asked to describe the physical traits of the character or visible aspects such as how he behaves – but they are even told *how* to do this. There is neither room nor any encouragement for the students to write about something more open-ended and personal, such as what they think is the reason *why* a character would behave a certain way. The questions are in some places even so specific that they go chapter by chapter: “How does she solve the crime in chapter 21?” (Augutis et al 73). The syllabus for the subject of English states that one of the goals to aim for is that students “improve their ability to read with good understanding literature in English and reflect over texts from different perspectives” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). It is not further specified which perspectives the students should be reflecting from, but there certainly is no reflection being done while answering this type of questions. The questions only encourage efferent reading.

*RP* has the same structure as *RL*, but in this textbook there are fewer separate tasks concerning films. Even when there is an opportunity to watch a film version of a novel, it might not be mentioned at all, as with *Dead Poets Society* by N. H. Kleinbaum which was made into a film in 1989. This novel is discussed in chapter 5 in *RP*. The only instance where film is brought up is in chapter 7 where the novel *About a Boy* by Nick Hornby is introduced.
Students are encouraged to watch a scene from the film version of the novel in order to discuss which version is better, and how the two versions differ (Plith et al. 141). Just like in *RL*, the questions in *RP* to discuss after having watched the film encourage an efferent stance.

Furthermore, it seems as though these two textbooks are addressing the student readers as future culture consumers who need to be given reasons as to why a particular book is interesting. An example of this in *RP* is the presentation of *About a Boy*, which we are informed, is “funny and touching from start to finish” (144). This makes the textbook function as some sort of promoter for the novel. The text speaks to the student as a culture consumer who needs to be entertained in order to want to read. At the same time, this appealing description places the book in an aesthetic reading context, by announcing that the book will touch their inner feelings. However, the factual and closed questions that come with each chapter likely lessen the effect of this encouragement to aesthetic reading.

### 4.1.3 Aesthetic culture in In the English-speaking World

As opposed to how film is utilized in *RL* and *RP* where the students, to some extent, are working directly with it, *ESW* only describes different aesthetic culture forms that are typical to the countries or regions of each chapter. For example, in the chapter about India, two of the subheadings are “Bollywood” and “New rhythms, old tunes”. These sections describe the Indian film industry and Indian music respectively. In the chapter about New Zealand (Goodwright et al. 96-105), some film stars, directors and opera singers are described. These sections will mostly contain name-dropping, rather than containing anything more in-depth about a particular film, music piece or other culture forms. In this respect, the textbook seems like a travel book that describes things to see and hear from a tourist point of view. The way architecture is described further contributes to the travel book atmosphere. In *ESW*, famous buildings such as the Taj Mahal (63) and the Sydney opera house (112) are shown in pictures with accompanying short descriptions declaring these buildings national symbols of India and Australia. This presentation is made much the same way one would present the must-sees of a country in a travel book. The implications of addressing the students as future tourists will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.

As mentioned earlier, each chapter of *ESW* contains an excerpt from a novel written by an author from the region or country in question. The questions and tasks regarding the short
excerpts are quite interesting. All chapters have the same format regarding this excerpt. First there are some questions under a heading called “Before you read”. These questions are generally quite aesthetic in nature. However, these questions are not explicitly connected to the excerpt – they only relate to the student. For example, in the chapter on the Caribbean, the excerpt is from a short story called *The Boyfriends* by Barbadian author Timothy Callender. The excerpt portrays a character called Elmina who lives with her grandparents. Her grandparents do not think she is old enough to have a boyfriend yet, and there is a small conflict regarding this issue. The task for the students under the heading “Before you read” asks them to think about the following:

Family members from different generations do not always share the same opinions, likes and dislikes on subjects like music and fashion. Have you ever experienced this ‘generation gap’ in your family? What subjects did you disagree about?

(Goodwright et al. 40)

These questions are not explicitly connected to the excerpt from the novel, and the link between the theme of the excerpt and the personal questions to the students is not explicitly stated either. The reader has to draw any connections themselves, wherefore I find these questions to not openly be promoting aesthetic reading or thinking about the text, even though it is possible to use them for that purpose.

There are also some more questions for the students to bear in mind while reading. These questions are also listed above the excerpts under the heading “Now read”. For the excerpt from Callender’s short story the question is: “Read the text quickly to find out about Elmina’s boyfriend James. What does the text tell you about him?” (40) This type of question is clearly encouraging efferent reading, especially as it is listed above the excerpt so that the student reads the question before reading the excerpt. There are also some questions below the excerpt that are supposed to help the students check their comprehension of the text. These questions are also encouraging efferent reading as they are focused on details of the plot and what happens in the story. This type of questions focuses on the students’ ability to understand English texts, rather than on the aesthetic aspects.
4.2 Anthropologic culture

Anthropologic culture appears to be the first thing on people’s minds when talking about culture in a foreign language teaching context; especially the perspective of culture as a product. Even so, there is (as mentioned in the introduction) no discussion about the implications of the discourse used about this term nor its usage in general. This is what will be analyzed below.

4.2.1 Anthropologic culture and the syllabi

As noted already in the introduction, even though the word culture is used so many times in the curricula and syllabi, these documents lack a discussion of what the term means. However, it is not only important to discuss culture and what it is to the people of today. Culture has a historical context that needs to be taken into consideration. One of the first issues that might come to mind is the historical use of culture as a means to separate the ‘others/the East’ from ‘us/the West’ through a discourse that Said calls orientalism. This is not problematized or discussed at all in neither syllabi nor textbooks. In his famous work *Orientalism* (first published in 1978), Said writes:

quote

In any society not totalitarian […] certain cultural forms predominate over others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony* […] Orientalism is [closely connected to] the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both inside and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures.

(7)

doi

This type of discourse in literary texts is what Said is analyzing in his book. The occurrence of orientalism is not solely confined to literary works; it permeates our entire perception of the world. An example of this is, perhaps surprisingly, the Swedish syllabi for the subject of English. In this document, under the heading “Structure and nature of the subject”, it says that English language education is to be used as a forum where students can “reflect over similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries […] as well as develop greater understanding and *tolerance of other people and cultures*” (The Swedish National Agency for Education, my italics). The word ‘tolerance’ is problematical as it indicates differences between ‘us’ and other people/cultures,
and that these differences are something which ‘we’ must put up with. It does not give a positive connotation of ‘the others’. According to Willinsky, we ought not to present cultural differences as “a fact of life” (1). Willinsky asks himself how we should go about helping students to understand “why differences of color and culture, gender and nationality continue to have such profound consequences” (1). That is an important question for any democratic educational system to consider, and it is difficult to answer it. However, to continue to use a discourse of tolerance and culture as a sign of differences in national legally binding documents such as the Swedish syllabi is clearly something that can be heavily criticized. Not only does it position other alien cultures as distant and different, but tolerance does not imply equality; it implies an undesirable difference with negative connotations.

To problematize and to be aware of this legacy of colonialism and imperialism in the context of education is crucially important, and something Willinsky also brings up in his book. According to Willinsky, this discourse of otherness could be a legacy from education itself:

[S]chooling has not been so much the great redeemer of prejudices as the tireless chronicler of what divides us. […] We are schooled in differences great and small, in borderlines and boundaries, in historical struggles and exotic practices, all of which extend the meaning of differences. We are taught to discriminate in both the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized and primitive, West and East, first and third worlds. We become adept at identifying the distinguishing features of this country, that culture, those people.

(Willinsky 1)

Just like researchers such as Palmberg have shown, Swedish schoolbooks tend to contain this discourse that is highlighted by Willinsky, and thereby they help perpetuate it by instilling it in their readers. I can of course only speculate as to the educational background of the authors of the syllabi, but I do not find it too farfetched to presume that it, at least to some extent, is Swedish. Willinsky also emphasizes the importance of asking ourselves “[w]hat comes […] of having one’s comprehension of the world so directly tied to one’s conquest of it” (3). This does not directly apply to Sweden as Sweden did not participate in historical events such as the scramble for Africa nor the conquest of Asia and America. Yet, as I have shown above, the syllabi encourage readers to identify with the countries that did participate, for example by using the word ‘tolerance’.
Similarities between cultures are also brought up in the syllabi. For instance, about the structure and nature of the subject, the syllabus for the subject of English says that a student’s “ability to reflect over similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries is developed continuously and leads eventually to an understanding of different cultures” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). Even so, to instruct students to reflect over similarities between their own culture and other cultures could imply that a different culture and its people are something separate from your own, with some similarities in common. The foreign culture is in my opinion thus positioned as something different and ‘other’, a separate entity that you can reflect over as an object. One would only reflect over similarities where one expects to find major differences, otherwise the reflection over similarities would be rather obsolete. Finding similarities does not necessarily have to imply that all the people in the world share something universally human. To find similarities instead becomes a difficult task, and the phrasing in the syllabi positions other cultures and peoples even further away from us both geographically and culturally. The foreign culture becomes an object that we study and analyze in order to discover or recognize a few common factors.

Naturally one could turn the argument around and say that one would only reflect over differences where one expects to find similarities. Nevertheless, I do not think that that is the case here as the syllabus in the same sentence positions the students’ “own cultural experiences” (ibid) at one end of the continuum, and the cultures of other English-speaking countries at the opposite end – stressing the differences between the two. The end of this quote from the syllabus further strengthens that impression of otherness by saying that this reflection will lead to “an understanding of different cultures” (ibid). Different cultures are alien and strange, and hence students can use their education in English to help them develop an understanding of these cultures.

A similar conclusion could be drawn from the syllabus for the English A course, where the emphasis is on comparisons between English-speaking cultures, as well as between those cultures and the students’ cultural experiences. The students should upon completion of the English A course “have a knowledge of social conditions, cultural traditions and ways of living in English-speaking areas, and be able to use this knowledge to compare cultures” (The Swedish National Agency for Education, my italics). In order to obtain a pass in the English A
course, students must “on the basis of a knowledge of societal conditions and customs in areas where English is spoken, make comparisons with their own cultural experiences” (ibid, my italics). To compare means, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “to examine the character or qualities of [something.] especially in order to discover resemblances or differences”. Even so, as the emphasis in the syllabi is on other cultures as different, the overall impression to the reader is likely to be that other cultures are alien and different.

These implicit, underlying premises of distance and difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are examples of the cultural program and the dialectic process of cultural input that Robinson writes about. We take in the information about other cultures, and our cultural program interprets this information. Because of how our program is constructed, the result (or output) is that other cultures are distant and very different from us, and the discourse about cultures is constructed accordingly.

4.2.2 Culture as a source of differences in Read & Log On and Read & Proceed
The discourse of cultural differences is clearly discernable in RL and RP. The student reader is positioned as an observer of foreign cultures, placed ‘here at home’ in the West. An example of this is the description in RL of the San people who inhabit the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. In fact, they are only referred to as the San people in the first line of the preamble of chapter 3. Throughout the remainder of the chapter they are referred to as “the Bushmen” (54), which the preamble explains that they are called (though it does not say whether this is the preference of the San people or of somebody else). The Merriam Webster Online dictionary states that ‘Bushmen’ is a collective word of Afrikaans origin used to describe several southern African tribes collectively. Thus, the San people are stripped of their identity as a separate culture and as a people already in the preamble. The chapter then goes on to describe how the San people are nomads, highly spiritual and skilled hunters. After colonization, this nomadic life began to decrease due to restrictions imposed upon the San people by colonizers. The text goes on to tell that “[t]oday, the Bushmen no longer correspond to the primitive image we might have of them” (55), thereby effectively reducing the San historic cultural heritage to something primitive altogether. It is, according to RL, less primitive to ”settle in larger groups around water sources where [the San people] can find modern facilities, such as schools and clinics” (55). Implicitly, the text says that for a people
to wish to live as nomads far away from western ‘necessities’ such as schools and hospitals is primitive and undesirable. This discourse amplifies the sense of difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the way Said describes in *Orientalism*.

The emphasis on cultural difference also has a geographical dimension. Willinsky writes that people do have different traditions and ways of living and that these differences often are a result of the environmental circumstances in which they live. However, connecting these cultural aspects to a certain part of the earth in effect portrays these people as a mirrored image of the geographical conditions of their home environment. According to Willinsky, the climate and the environment are common features of e.g. travel literature and teaching materials such as textbooks, and it actively promotes “an identification of the other with a certain landscape, designated as that place which, in its distance, is other than here” (147).

The text in chapter 3 of *RL* intertwines anthropologic culture with geographical location and uses the spatial distance between ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ as a source of differences between us. By portraying the San people against their environment (the Kalahari Desert) and the climate there, their anthropologic culture is reduced to a reflection of their surroundings, just like Willinsky points out in his book. This differentiating discourse can be directly traced back to the syllabus for the subject of English which states that one of the goals to aim for is that students should “develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). The San people’s culture is positioned as something distant, foreign and strange that we must understand and tolerate.

As a direct contrast to observing the culture of ‘the others’ which exists in a distant place far away, the culture of ‘us’ is positioned much closer to home. The readers of *RL* are asked to identify with it e.g. by empathizing with an 18 year old male character named Sam, who has had to give his eleven-month old son up for adoption. The students are given the task of writing an explanatory letter from the young father’s point of view which is to be given to the son when he turns 18 (Augutis et al. 51). The reader is assumed to come from the same culture as Sam, where most people would agree on that having a child at 18 is problematic. To have a child at this age might not at all be seen as a problem by someone who comes from another culture. In ‘our’ culture, certain things are expected from us at age 18 such as going to school, having friends and partying. We are not expected to be able to provide for ourselves and a baby at that age. This norm is part of the cognitive definition of culture as a process,
where our culture is the filter or computer program that Robinson describes. This program processes the data that an 18-year old is father to a little baby and causes us to understand this as something problematic, whereas someone with another ‘cultural program’ might not come to the same conclusion. Even though Robinson claims that this definition is less common in a language teaching context (12), I think that this is an example of where this ‘cultural program’ is evident. Perhaps this culture definition is not spoken of explicitly in a language teaching context, but it is most certainly implicitly present as in this example.

In *RP*, cultural differences are also prominent even though only one chapter is about non-western culture. This third chapter is about global English. The novel presented in this chapter, *(Un)arranged Marriage* by Bali Rai, depicts a boy character of Indian origin named Manny, who lives in the UK. At the age of 14 he is informed that his father has arranged a marriage for him with the daughter of one of the father’s friends in India. At 17, Manny is left behind in India after the family’s holiday there. This sounds quite shocking and barbaric to ‘us’ from the western culture. It certainly gives the student reader the opportunity to learn about different cultural conditions. Nonetheless, to portray this as “traditional culture” (Plith et al. 64) in India again focuses on what is astounding and shocking about ‘the others’ in the East; that supposedly distant, barbaric and unknown place. However, it is important to note that even though the novel itself might not give this impression, all students might not read this particular novel and will then only read the text in the textbook. Hence, the students who do not choose to read this novel might take the shocking and astounding impressions with them from having read these pages in the textbook.

4.2.3 The student as a future tourist in In the English-speaking World

Distant and unknown places on earth can be portrayed as different and threatening, but they can also be portrayed as appealing and attracting to us, which is the case in *ESW*. We are shown pictures of exotic Maori dancers (98), national architectural symbols like the Taj Mahal in India (63) or breathtaking sandy white beaches on the Pacific Islands (92). The reader is informed about activities to do in the countries and regions such as bungee jumping and sailing in New Zealand (102-103) and visiting the Kruger National Park in South Africa to see exotic animals (51). Local delectable dishes from the Caribbean are described in mouth-watering detail (38), rather than focusing on the cultural context of the dishes. I have only mentioned a
few examples here; there are many more. This makes ESW appear to be a travel book of sorts (an observation I made already in section 4.1.3).

The anthropologic culture of these countries and regions is in this way easily turned into goods that we can consume as tourists. This can be connected to what Willinsky calls “the imperial show-and-tell” (55), which is also the title of chapter 3 in his book. This tendency started with the colonization of the world. Willinsky writes that

instruments of public instruction, including museum, garden, encyclopaedia, exposition, and travel […], educated the eye to divide the world according to patterns of empire. […] A public was lining up for these institutions, and it was leaving them amused, amazed [and] informed.

(57)

According to Michael Hall and Hazel Tucker in Tourism and Postcolonialism, to position former colonies as tourist attractions and their culture as goods turns tourism into something that “both reinforces and is embedded in postcolonial relationships” (2). These relationships are referred to as “neocolonial relationships, a situation in which an independent country continues to suffer intervention and control from a foreign state” (ibid 2). This intervention does not have to be done by states; according to Hall and Tucker, neocolonialism can also “refer to the expansion of capitalism and economic and cultural globalisation [which enables the] core powers [to] exercise influence over the postcolonial periphery” (ibid 2). In this type of discourse, “[t]ourist destinations [are portrayed] as sites for tourists, and the people within them as sights for tourists” (137) as Caira Aitchison so aptly puts it in her article “Theorizing Other discourses of tourism, gender and culture”. She goes on to write that these places and people are described through terms that together make up a discourse created by tourism agencies and companies to turn these places and peoples into Paradise located in a distant place far away from us, and that “[t]hese descriptors signify a colonial legacy where places are viewed as mystical or treasured landscapes preserved by time to be explored, and often exploited, in their natural state” (Aitchison 137). It is of interest to note that the photographs also contribute to the travel book atmosphere in ESW.

ESW does bring up the downsides to tourism, as in the chapter on the Caribbean where readers are informed that reality looks different to tourist visitors who can shower whenever they like and visit any beaches, whereas the local population might not have running water and could be denied access to public beaches to prevent tourists from being bothered by
people trying to sell things to them (38). However, by mentioning and presenting potential tourist attractions to such a large extent, ESW still contributes to the perpetuation of a tourist’s view of these countries and regions. This could be another indicator of how deeply Robinson’s “cultural program” really affects us; even when we try to be balanced, we still cannot completely break free from our ‘cultural filter’.

Furthermore, by contributing to these exotic images of the postcolonial countries and regions as destinations for tourists, ESW addresses the student as a future tourist. As a tourist you might take interest in foreign cultures but the interest risks to be in the travel destinations as a source of experiences for oneself; not as having an intrinsic cultural value.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter I will make brief summaries of the most important results that were derived from the analysis. I will begin with the results about aesthetic culture in the syllabi and textbooks, followed by anthropologic culture in the same manner. The final, third section will consist of a pedagogical discussion about the implications of my conclusions, as well as a discussion about possible future research areas.

5.1 Aesthetic culture in the syllabi and the selected textbooks

I have found that literature is the main aesthetic culture form that is mentioned in both syllabi and textbooks. Efferent reading is the primary focus. The tasks that students work with after reading excerpts or novels mainly are designed in such a way that they check the students’ comprehension of the texts and their ability to retell the content. Furthermore, the syllabi give the impression that literature (aesthetic culture) and anthropologic culture are interchangeable; you can use one to learn about the other. Rosenblatt proposes that they are inseparable, while Spivak advocates a merger between the two spheres as a future goal. Both critics see the benefits to be gained from this merger, but also point out the danger of going about this incautiously. The syllabi do not at all indicate any problems regarding this endeavour.
5.2 Anthropologic culture in the syllabi and the selected textbooks

The common denominators in both syllabi and textbooks, in relation to anthropologic culture, are difference and distance. This is most likely a result of our cultural program which determines how we view the world and interpret what we see, learn and experience. There are phrasings such as that the students should learn to tolerate other peoples and cultures even in the syllabi. This discourse is continued throughout the textbooks. The discussions and descriptions all have difference as a starting point, and thus passing this stance on to the reader. The distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is also emphasized, as for example through addressing the student as a future tourist. This is problematic, as other cultures and places become sights and sites for us to see and visit, rather than being portrayed as having an intrinsic value.

5.3 Pedagogical discussion

The results of my analysis raise many questions about how to proceed with teaching students about culture. Regarding aesthetic culture I find it interesting that textbooks are designed in such a way that they turn fictitious literature into a tool. This tool seems to solely serve as a means to check whether the students have developed the practical language skills they are expected to have. I have not been able to find any clarifications in the syllabi explaining why they enforce literature and the reading of fiction, when students could read any type of text and still achieve the same goals. One does not have to read a fictitious text in order to check one’s reading skills or ability to summarize a longer text. Students that might find reading novels a tedious and irksome task are thus needlessly forced to do so. None of the syllabi promote any aesthetic values about literature, nor do they contain an indication that these values should be taught to students. With these guidelines, it is no surprise that the textbooks are designed accordingly.

However, concerning this issue it is of interest to note that the syllabi could be contradicting themselves. Factual questions, the encouragement towards efferent reading and the use of templates with the same questions for multiple novels certainly do not help the students achieve some of the aims of the subject according to the syllabus for the subject of English. For example, it says that students “need the ability to further develop their knowledge on completion of schooling” (The Swedish National Agency for Education, Syllabus for the
subject of English). How can one do this when there upon completion of upper secondary school no longer will be any questions to direct every step of one’s reading, and if one is accustomed to relying on efferent reading? The lack of personal connections between the students as readers and the texts, as well as the students being forced to read literature, could also cause students to dislike reading. Furthermore, the efferent reading encouraged in school might prevent students from achieving one of the goals of the curriculum: “In their studies pupils shall acquire a foundation for life-long learning” (5).

The way anthropologic culture is described and worked with can also be traced back directly to the syllabi. The discourse of difference and distance is reiterated in all of these documents, and the textbooks contain (also not surprisingly) more of the same. How could the term ‘culture’ then better be applied and described in syllabi and textbooks? Instead of using differences, distance and other factors that separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ as a starting point, syllabi and textbooks could use what all humans have in common and what makes us alike as a foundation. It is perfectly possible to think and reason in terms of ‘we’, instead of in terms of ‘us’ over here and ‘them’ over there. We are born, we have children and relatives, and we have to work together in societies in order to survive. By this I do not intend to imply that it is wrong to say that other people and societies do things differently and describe this difference, but depending on the starting point the sometimes derogatory and very differentiating discourse could change shape considerably. This is something to bear in mind both for teachers and textbook authors, as well as those who create the curricula and syllabi. The way both aesthetic and anthropologic culture is described and used can be traced back directly to these legally binding documents, and it is therefore of the utmost importance how the syllabi are phrased and what they actually say.

The discourse of tolerance, however unintentional, actually conflicts with the curriculum for the non-compulsory school system:

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school shall represent and impart”

(3, my italics).

As already discussed in the analysis, the syllabus for the subject of English states that it is in the structure and nature of the subject to teach students a “tolerance of other people and
cultures” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). Tolerance implies *inequality* in the sense that one party tolerates something negative and undesirable about the other party. ‘We’ are thus better than ‘the others’. Since the curriculum directs all education and all subjects for upper secondary school, this conflict between the curriculum and the syllabus further supports that a change in the syllabi and textbooks is needed. If the manner in which other peoples and cultures are spoken of does not change, this negative discourse could be perpetuated and instilled in students, especially as English teachers rely heavily on this particular teaching material.

To change the syllabi is a lengthy process, but the textbooks are more easily changed and do not require any parliament votes, even though it is in the interest of the textbook authors to follow the syllabi. Therefore, against the background of the results of my analysis, I find the current lack of a specific institution to control and analyze the content of textbooks very troublesome. There is clearly a great need for critical analyses and discussions about textbooks, not only to make sure they are correct from a factual point of view, but also to analyze the kind of issues that have been brought up in this paper. Of course, the institution and the people who would analyze the textbooks would still have the same cultural program as the authors, which might prevent them from being able to discern the kind of issues I have discussed in this paper. Even so, I think that with an academic background and an awareness of the issues that they should be looking for, these experts could still be able to perform this task satisfactorily. It is a matter of being aware of the problem, and of reading the textbooks with ‘the critical glasses on’. By this I mean that if you read the textbooks expecting them to contain objective truths and facts you might not think about these issues of a more implicit nature, but if you read the textbooks specifically looking for certain discourses you will have an easier time spotting them.

Finally, it is important to point out that I do not claim to provide a complete picture of what students will learn about culture. As mentioned in the chapter 3, I have only looked at the syllabi and textbooks, without including complementing interviews, questionnaires or classroom observations that might have been able to create a more complete (and possibly also different) picture of what students are taught about English-speaking cultures. A comparison between what the syllabi and textbooks say, what teachers teach and what students then actually learn would also be interesting to do, but it would require a large scale
study over a longer period of time than I have had at my disposal. I believe that similar studies of all language courses, not only for upper secondary school but also for compulsory school, could be a good starting point for further, much needed research concerning these issues.

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