Teaching the Postcolonial

Disrupting a euro-centric world-view in the multicultural classroom

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1. Introduction

Pupils should:

be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries.(English A syllabus)

Pupils should:

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.(English A syllabus)

be able to describe the position enjoyed by the English language in the world, as well as, on the basis of a knowledge of societal conditions and customs in areas where English is spoken, make comparisons with their own cultural experiences.(Grade criteria in Swedish upper secondary school).

These quotations are taken from the syllabus for the English A course, the first year on Swedish upper secondary school. The aims clearly state that literature from the English-speaking world shall be used within the education as an instrument for learning about other cultures. The pupils shall also be able to apply this cultural knowledge to put their own culture in perspective. The syllabus constitutes the national regulation of English A throughout the whole country. In the Swedish decentralised school system it is then up to each municipality, school and teacher to interpret the aims of the syllabus. Teaching will then be designed after these interpretations. When it comes to literature the aims do not state any particular
volume of reading or work that should be included throughout the course, which for
good and for bad gives the teacher the freedom of interpretation.

The issue that this essay mainly will focus on is the representation of culture in the
course English A. The pupil shall gain knowledge about cultures in different parts of
the English speaking world. Which cultures are chosen to be included in the
curriculum and which are considered less important? This is a complex issue that
places a lot of responsibility on the teacher.

In order to put their own world view in perspective the pupils need to learn about
cultures that are different from their own. To achieve the aims stated in the syllabus
within the course English A there must be attempts to disrupt and shake the euro-
centric world view often found among westerners. To widen the pupils' view of
foreign cultures they must be presented with an alternative to the canonized work of
western authors and in this case postcolonial literature becomes an obvious focus of
study. Knowledge and understanding of unfamiliar cultures would result in a higher
tolerance towards people who belong to them.

This essay will focus on two main questions around the issue of cultural studies
and postcolonial literature within the English subject on upper secondary level. The
first one is the analytic Why? which aims to analyse and investigate the hypothesis
that including postcolonial studies in the course gives the pupils a chance to improve
their tolerance by developing a more versatile perspective on foreign cultures. To
come to terms with the importance of culture the discussion of this matter will partly
be based on some of the works and ideas of renowned postcolonial theorist Homi
Bhabha. His ideas about the construction of identity in the interstices of cultures are
to great extent the basis of the theoretical section.

The second question concerns How? This aspect of the essay will focus on culture
and postcolonial studies in a more didactical perspective. Firstly, what can the teacher do in order to increase the accessibility of postcolonial literature and in this way enhance the cultural perspective of the pupils? Secondly it will on a theoretical level explore different methods and ways of teaching and learning about culture.

1.2. Background

Lost in interpretation – an overview

One of the most important principles of the Swedish school system is perhaps the idea of an equal education. An equal education means that everyone, regardless of ethnical background, religion, where in the country they go to school and so on, has the right to a good education. The concept of an equal education has always been complicated and hard to fulfil. The decentralization of the Swedish school system resulted in a shift of power over education. The shift led to an increase of the municipalities' influence in pedagogical, organizational and economic questions.

The relationship between adaptability on a local level and the idea of a national standard of equal education is in a way paradoxical. The national steering documents establish “frameworks and guidelines for how the education is to be conducted and assessed using goal documents, syllabuses, tests, grading criteria and general guidelines” (The Swedish National Agency for Education). These documents are the foundation of the Swedish school system. They consist partly of syllabus goals such as the ones quoted in the beginning of this essay. They also consist of more general guidelines that do not deal explicitly with particular subjects or courses but the educational system as a whole. As mentioned earlier in this section, the pedagogical influence over education has been moved to a local level after the reform of decentralization, which means that each teacher has the task of interpreting the
syllabus goals and applying them in their pedagogical work. The idea of “equal education” in a decentralised school system is probably the most challenging issue in Swedish schools. On a local level the interpretations of the national goals will be affected by the school's economic resources and even by the teacher's interests and knowledge. The interpretations of the goals themselves have extensive impact on the structure and quality of the education. This puts a huge responsibility on the individual teachers.

Looking back, as a result of the Second World War and the holocaust, emphasis in the Swedish school system has since been to educate pupils into being critically thinking individuals. Therefore issues like canonicity and cultural values are ideas that pupils need to know about, ideas that they need to make up their own minds about. To draw individual critical conclusions, craves versatile knowledge and an insight into more than one perspective, versatility that must become accessible to pupils through education. The school system and the methods and materials used within it can of course not be completely objective, but it lies within the responsibility of the system to inform pupils that they are not.

Classes in school are heterogenous groups that in most cases include pupils of different ethnical and cultural background. Taking these facts into consideration the importance of teaching culture in education and increase inter-cultural tolerance becomes obvious.

2. Purpose and research questions

The aim of the essay is to investigate high school English teachers' views on teaching culture within literature in the English subject. The essay will examine the teachers' different interpretations of syllabus goals based on qualitative interviews. Through the course of the essay I hope to shed light on the following research questions:
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- How do teachers at upper secondary school interpret the two selected syllabus goals?
- How do teachers value and prioritize teaching culture within the English subject?
- To what extent is culture from other parts of the English-speaking world included in the course English A?
- What methods do teachers use to teach culture from different parts of the English speaking world?

The study will focus on three or four individual teachers' views on this subject and does not in that matter give a general overview of how Swedish teachers of English in general value knowledge about foreign cultures. The purpose is rather to problematise the effect that different interpretations and prioritisations of syllabus goals may have on teaching culture. This with the opinion that teaching culture is an important part of upper secondary school.

In addition to the interviews with high school teachers the discussion is also based on a questionnaire with 81 pupils to examine their views on learning about culture in school.

- Do pupils find material about other parts of the English-speaking world interesting and relevant?
- Do pupils find that there is a cultural context within the English subject?
- What attitudes do pupils have towards studying culture and reading literature within the English subject?

The purpose of the questionnaire is partly to find a counter perspective to the results of the interviews, this in order to examine both sides of the issue. Theory discussed throughout the essay does not attend exclusively to postcolonial theory but also theories of identification, social categorisation and cultural value. The essay is based
on an idea that postcolonial theory can be studied in Swedish upper secondary school in order to understand cultural identity and raise awareness of the complex issues of canonicity and cultural hierarchies. The aim of the theoretical section of this essay is to attempt to distinguish and shed light on the underlying social processes that constitute ethnocentrism and cultural identity. It breaks down ideas of socially articulated differences as part of the identification process and presents previous ideas on the complex relationship between culture, knowledge and power.

The essay also contains empirical data collected to process the didactical perspective. The aim is to make a descriptive analysis of how interpretations of syllabus goals are shaped differently in practice.

2.1 Hypothesis

Based on previous research done within the field of education and the equal education in the decentralised school system, such as *Likvärdighet i skolan – En antologi*, I assume that there will be differences in the teachers' interpretations and perception of syllabus goals. The project is also based on the hypothesis that a possible method of teaching culture in school is by studying postcolonial literature.

3. Method

3.1 Selection of interviewees

The selection of interviewees was based on a few different criteria. Initially, the idea was to select teachers who teach the course English A on Swedish upper secondary schools. The idea was to simplify the task of finding suitable objects of study since there is a wide selection of teachers.
From the beginning the idea was also to select teachers who work at different schools but within the same municipality to ensure that the interviewees are independent from each other. But at the same time because the geographical nearness underlines the issue of the effect wide interpretational freedom of the syllabus can have on the curricula. However, finding suitable and voluntary interviewees turned out to be harder than expected so in the end of the interviewees work in different municipalities.

Another aim that was changed during the process was the idea to only interview teachers who teach English A. One of the interviewees, Arlene, does not teach that particular course which in the end means that this interview is not entirely relevant to all the research question but is nevertheless valuable in the discussion regarding the question how teachers teach and what method they use. The interviewees were first contacted via email found on the schools' web sites except one who was selected by recommendation and contacted by telephone, the interviews were conducted by telephone.

3.2 Choice of method

As mentioned earlier the empirical part of the essay, the survey, consists of two parts. One part consists of the questionnaire results with a quantitative structure that will focus on the pupils' views on studying culture and reading literature within the English subject. The empirical data collected in the quantitative part of the essay will be compiled in diagrams in the result section. The choice of method is in this case supported by the idea that quantitative research gives an overview of the general
attitude and comprehension among pupils when it comes to the issue of learning about culture within the English subject. Eventually the results from both the interviews and the questionnaires will be compiled and then juxtaposed to make a more comprehensive image of the issue at hand. The interviews obviously provide the teachers' perspective and the questionnaires the perspective of the pupils.

3.3 Ethical aspects

To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees their names and work places have been kept secret. In order to ease the work load of transcribing the interviews I informed the interviewees that another person than myself might listen to the recording of the interview, this just to ensure that asking for help with transcribing would not compromise the ethics of the project. Participants in the questionnaire are completely anonymous.

3.4 Method criticism

One aspect of the methodology that might become problematic is the time of the interviews. In general it seems hard to sit down with an interviewee since time is of the essence in the teacher's profession and certainly during the time of year when the study was performed. The second half of the spring semester is the period when teachers are most busy with grading pupils and many teachers have pupils who are about to graduate. Thirty minutes is perhaps not enough to really reflect on some of the complex issues treated in the interview. In some cases it was hard to get the interviewees' honest opinions since they focus on transmitting an image of themselves which I think could have been different if it was possible to change if you
had the opportunity to sit and talk a little longer and create a less tense situation. So
in some cases the interviewees were more concerned with projecting a politically
correct image rather than reflecting and give their honest opinion. The questionnaire I
have chosen to do in Swedish to increase understandability for the participants and
thereby avoid misunderstandings and unanswered questions to as great extent as
possible.

3.5 Project execution

3.5.1 The interviews

Three interviews were carried out in the course of the study, all interviewees teach at
upper secondary school. The interviews were carried out supported by an interview
schema that was designed based on the research questions. All interviews were
recorded with a dictaphone and then transcribed into text.

Outcome

In the beginning it was hard to find participants for the interviews, few of the emails
sent out where answered and even fewer by people who were interested in being
interviewed. Most teachers give the time aspect as the reason not to participate. This
resulted in a small change of plan. The initial idea was to interview teachers active in
the same municipality but since so few answered I had look elsewhere as well. In the
end, one of the interviews was conducted over telephone. The other two interviews
took place in person at the work places of the interviewees.

3.5.2 The questionnaires

Initially the intention was to support the aim by answering the following two research
questions: “Do pupils find that the course English A encourages them to reflect and make comparisons between cultures?” and “Do pupils find that the English A course provide sufficient knowledge about “postcolonial” culture to meet the goals stated in the syllabus?” The results of the questionnaires however did not really help in coming to terms with these two questions so these research questions were changed in retrospect into the current ones.

The questionnaires were carried out at two different schools and in four different classes, three of the classes still study English A and one of the classes has moved on to the B course. The questionnaires were filled in during English lessons. The pupils in the survey were informed that participation is voluntary and that they were allowed to refuse to receive a questionnaire. The participants were also ensured that they were completely anonymous within the survey and that if they did not want to show that they did not participate they could hand in the questionnaire unanswered.

Outcome
The questionnaire was eventually filled in by 81 participants, the four classes that took part combined consisted of 89 pupils minus the ones not present during the lessons when the questionnaires were filled in. 2 of the questionnaires were handed in unanswered and 6 were filled in incompletely and were therefore not used and presented in the results section.

4. Theoretical framework
The purpose of this section is to explain the concepts culture, identity and canonicity and define their meaning and relevance throughout the essay.

4.1. The construction of identity
One idea that addresses the question why studying culture in school is important is
the notion of the construction of identity. In postcolonial studies there are ideas that
discuss identity as a product of an articulation of cultural differences. A subject's
process of identification begins in the area between cultures, or as Homi K. Bhabha
puts it in his book *The Location of Culture*:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to
think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus
on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of
cultural differences. These 'in between' spaces provide the terrain for
elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate
new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and
contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (2).

As stated in the quote above it is not the cultural difference in itself that initiates the
construction of an identity but the socially articulated constructions of these
differences. The way we see ourselves is in relation to our view of others, to how we
perceive others as being different. An important aspect is that these cultural, sexual or
racial differences through which we define ourselves are not pre-given and fixed but
a result of a social construction, a constructed idea of what defines the self from the
other. Identity is constructed socially in interaction with other people, in school for
example. The cultural differences are there when they have been acknowledged and
articulated.

A binary logic through which identities of difference is often created is the
opposition of self/other. These constructions of selfhood and otherness are shaped
within additional binary oppositions such as black/white, man/woman. These
articulations of cultural differences are as mentioned above socially constructed,
articulated within social formations.
Here I would like to stop to discuss the construction of identity through ideology, an idea previously discussed in Chris Tiffin and Lawson's *De-Scribing Empire*. Here follows a definition of ideology in this case with ideas of Marxist theorist Louis Althusser. Althusser defines ideology as a system of representation; this system consists of sub-consciously established assumptions of reality (Ferretter 75). It is through these assumptions or constructions that a person perceives the world and his/her position in it.

The interesting aspect of Althusser is in this case not only his perception of ideology in itself but his ideas of how ideology and society are reproduced. According to Althusser people are interpelated into subjects through government institutions, these institutions serve as ideological instruments that incorporate people into these systems of representation. So while viewing ourselves as free thinking agents, ideas and values are imposed on us on an often unconscious level.

An example of an ideological institution in society is school, so the values and ideas imposed on pupils have great impact on the construction of their identity. Turning back to the syllabus goal stated earlier in this text the school as a government institution has an important task and a responsibility in educating pupils into critically thinking members of society.

As mentioned Bhabha uses the polarity of binary pairs to explain cultural differences in his explanation of the construction and articulation of otherness. Applied to a colonial aspect the social articulation of difference from the colonizers lays the foundation of what Johnston calls a "regime of truth" (96), that is to say the construction of a truth, which lies in the power of the colonizers. Here a eurocentric world-view is shaped where the socially articulated truth of the west will be in the collective mind of the European population. So identity does not only exist on an
individual level but also collectively.

According to Michael Hogg and Graham Vaughan's *Social psychology* an individual identifies himself/herself as a member of in-groups. It works in the opposite direction as well as the individual dissociates himself/herself with other, out-groups. Within these social group formations stereotypes about other groups are constructed as the in-group is favoured at the expense of the out-group (Hogg & Vaughan 418). In school these types of group formations occur all the time, certain pupils maybe share the same interest and identify themselves with each other. All of a sudden a group, or social formation, is created. Within this group a process of constructing a culture goes on in a small scale. Perhaps wearing a certain type of clothes is the socially articulated norm within this group, wearing a certain type of clothes or using certain slang while talking is not universally accepted but the norm within a small group of people. What has happened in the group is that a culture has started to form and also a status, roughly you need to wear the right clothes in order to be accepted within the group.

So, tying this together with Hogg's and Vaughan's in- and out-group model, this favouring of certain norms and marginalization of others results in ethnocentrism or euro-centrism, the term that Johnston uses.

In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject its representations to a normalizing subject. Only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that otherness which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity (Johnston 96) (original italics).
One must first understand that stereotypes are constructed to understand the ambivalence that comes as a result of the collective articulation of a difference. At the same time as the constructed stereotypes are fixed they are disordered, this ambivalence within the articulated difference is central to discriminatory power. So defining what the difference is that means that a certain person cannot belong to a group in itself is not as important as the idea that the group has the power to create, to socially articulate a difference and thereby discriminate the person.

McLeod uses the example of Frantz Fanon who as a representative of the people of a French colony in his encounter with indigenous French people came to question and re-evaluate his own identity, other people's view of him as an inferior is reflected on himself as a result of the colonizer's constructed superiority. “In this scenario Fanon's identity is defined in negative terms by those in a position of power” (20). This further stresses how the division of cultural differences into hierarchies serves as an instrument of power wielded against “the other” in this case in the cultural difference within the binary pair of white/black. Identity is partially constructed of collectively articulated differences. These differences are cemented and legitimised within the social formations in which we form our lives. Collectively these ideologies and identities are reproduced through ideological institutions, where as Althusser describes it, people are interpellated into subjects. An example of such an institution is obviously the Swedish school system.

Althusser's ideas do not suggest that this interpellation takes place through some sort of manipulative scheme but that this is the natural reproduction of ideology. The ruling ideology is transmitted within the institution but an important part of the process is that the people within the social formation will have effect on each other. It is not only the ruling ideology, the one transmitted authoritatively, which forms the
ideology of the subject. As in the example of a group in school, the pupils in the
group will perhaps have greater influence on each other than the influence
transmitted from teachers. This process is similar to the one Bhabha speaks about, the
articulation of difference. An articulation of a difference is indirectly an articulation
of likeness that leads to the idea of belonging to a certain group. There are striking
similarities between Bhabha's perception of the construction of identity and
Althusser's construction of ideology in the sense that they both are just that,
constructions that are formed within social formations. To roughly summarize the
section above, ideology is the system through which we make sense of the world. By
using this system we create our identity. The norms and values that constitute our
ideology is created through social processes, just as culture.

So far, this section has mostly focused on the process in which culture is created
and why culture has an important impact on identity and the significance of this
expression in general. The word culture is in many ways ambivalent due to its many
definitions. To simplify the use of the word in this context culture consists of actions
that can be observed and studied such as customs and traditions. This definition of
the word is known as the production perspective and originates from behaviouristic
theory (Gagnestam). The example with a group of pupils does not constitute this
essay's definition of the word but is used to try and explain the construction of
culture. Generally in this essay culture means national culture since it is about the
idea of an intercultural context in the English education.

4.2 Canonicity and cultural status

Michael Gluzman writes in his book The politics of canonicity: Lines of resistance in
modernist Hebrew poetry about what an impact literature has on building a national
or cultural identity. He discusses the survival of some texts and the marginalization of others through the lens of cultural status. In the prologue of the book he explains the derivation of the word *canon*: “which derives directly from the Greek word *kanon* (rod, reed), which in turn has root in the Hebrew word *kane* (or *kne-mida*, measure stick)”(2).

Focusing on canonised works of western authors while reading literature in school might eventually result in reinforcement and continuation of the constructed view of foreign culture as an “other”. Postcolonial areas are to say the least in many ways tainted by colonial history and from a western perspective considered subordinate. Western canon formation thus leads to the construction of unjustified hierarchies where western culture and knowledge is considered more significant than the postcolonial. However, in *The Postcolonial Exotic* Huggan argues that postcolonial literature may in fact cement prejudicial assumptions about foreign culture. Huggan opposes the anthropological way of reading African literature and talks about “a Western model reader who views African literature, Africa itself, through the distorting filter of the anthropological exotic”(41). African literature is often distributed through European publishing houses and Huggan further argues the possibility that the publishers’ ideas of postcolonial literature has an impact on what in the end is distributed. So the work of African authors is coloured by the Western idea of African culture in the moment of writing.

Most theorists would agree with the statement that postcolonial criticism is a complex and in a way an ambivalent notion. In the introduction of *The Postcolonial Exotic* the author states that “postcolonialism has taken full advantage of its semantic vagueness”. This is a vagueness which is the result of numerous definitions and a multitude of different methodological approaches. Huggan writes that postcolonial
studies are keen on “inviting cross-cultural comparisons but with insufficient cultural knowledge” (2). The known facts about the culture of study are normally not enough knowledge to create an authentic image to be used as a template in comparison with other cultures. Again, having considered this idea the issue of teaching culture in school of course becomes exceedingly problematic. Still the fundamental goal is not to present and transmit quantitative knowledge of foreign cultures but rather to present the idea that the canon is not always right.

On the other hand, given the idea that cultural identity is socially articulated and rather than originary, there is no single authentic representation of a culture. In the essay “Postcolonial literature and the Politics of Representation in School Programs” Ingrid Johnston says:

In addition to Bakhtin and Graff, my research has been informed by critical and postcolonial theorists whose writings have reminded me how social power operates in cultural and ideological practises in schools and how we call attention to complex relationships between culture, knowledge, and power. (14)

Johnston discusses the importance of being aware of the influence that cultural status has in determining what knowledge is credible. Canonicity is as she explains not based as much on the actual material, the text itself if it is literature, but is a question of status. The important aspect is perhaps not so much that pupils learn authentic facts about other cultures but that they are presented with an opportunity to examine their own culture from another perspective. In order to disrupt euro-centric views the pupils must get the opportunity to contemplate the idea that cultural status is a social construction and understand that cultural hierarchies are the result of this. Bourdieu argues about the notion of cultural capital that it is always distributed unevenly. He
describes it as being part of a symbolic economy tied up in interlocking hierarchies. There is an on-going struggle for legitimacy across cultural borders.

The teacher's task becomes even more complex since it is up to him/her to decide what material should be included on the curriculum and relevant in this discussion which cultures should be represented. There is still an issue of cultural representation and the selection will largely be affected by the teacher's evaluation of what is important. There is really no way that studying culture in school, in this case within the field of language studies, that is coined from an objective selection of study material. Neither is the approach to the material, as McLeod puts it “Reading practises are never politically neutral” (39). An interesting aspect concerning knowledge and hierarchies is the fact that the syllabus goals selected for analysis in this essay explicitly state what method we should use to achieve them. In other words reading literature is an accepted method within education that traditionally has a higher authority than other methods.

The goals themselves are affected by tradition and educational culture in the moment of writing. The status of reading literature as an effective teaching method is not necessarily completely justified. The fact that it is articulated as the method to achieve a nationally stated goal must be based on the assumption that it is generally effective. This would affirm an idea that within the nationally stated syllabus goals there is little consideration of the fact that groups are heterogeneous, but rather that the goals address a standard student. The steering documents do not in this issue consider pupils with dyslexia or pupils that for other reasons could benefit more from another way of approaching knowledge. This raises the question whether or not there is a standard student that the goals are designed for.
5. Results

First of all the names of the interviewees have been changed in order to secure their anonymity and to increase readability. A further measures for anonymity is that all the names are female. The interviewees are cited under the aliases: Alice, Arlene and Anna.

5.1. The interviews: Quotes from the three interviews performed will be compiled in regard to their informative qualities towards the research questions. The results section will be divided into smaller sections with a research question as a headline for each. Starting with the first research question:

5.1.2 How do teachers on high school level interpret the two selected syllabus goals? In the first interview carried out the homogeneity of the average English class was questioned by Alice:

“Even if the course plan or the goals are similar for every student at upper secondary school you have to see and you have to analyse the class and see what kind of things you can do with them.”(Alice). This was the interviewee's answer to how to interpret the syllabus goal: “be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries”. So the interviewee regards the goal as something rather abstract in itself. Interpreting the syllabus goals must always be done in relation to the heterogeneity of the class. Alice explains that it is important to connect the context to the pupil's area of interest:

The students here at this school, they are going to be, most of them are going to be chefs in the future […] I may say that we. We are working a
lot with projects at this school... so they have finished a project... last week called the world's kitchens. And it means they have been working with different English-speaking countries all around the world (Alice). She does not believe in achieving this goal merely by reading literature in class. Since the pupils' specialisation is cooking it is important to adapt the material to their area of interest. Through this project the pupils study culture from other parts of the English-speaking world with a culinary approach. Further on the interviewee mentions how hard it can be to motivate the pupils to read literature and how important motivation is.

When answering the same question the second interviewee, Arlene, opens up for a discussion about the syllabus goals in general. Arlene teaches at a Swedish upper secondary school but at the International Baccalaureate Program. “The problem with all of these goals is that there is no product. They produce nothing, it's absorption, they sit there and they're meant to absorb the teacher.”(Arlene). Arlene finds the goals of the Swedish syllabus as too passive and that they do not strive for a product, the fact that the syllabus does not give instructions on how to approach the goals is a problem as well as there are no examples of how the pupils should show how they have fulfilled the goals. When it comes to the first selected goal she says: “First, this is erroneous [the syllabus goal] about english-speaking countries, they think is the UK or the US, so you don't have a cultural context”(Arlene). Arlene thinks that in the view of most Swedish teachers the English-speaking world consists of the US and the UK and there for there is no room for a cultural context outside of a western one within this syllabus goal. She says about the goal:

It's too banal, it's too much like a book report and it doesn't deal with any (...?) issues, you have to show injustice. You have a character here, it is
unjust treatment of that character. But take that in a cultural context, that's unjust treatment in Sweden, but how would you see it if you put on a different lens. Whether it's a postcolonial lens or a different one (Arlene).

Arlene is of the opinion that in order to initiate a discussion in a cultural context in class you need to locate a cultural difference. As in the quote, find something in the literature that the pupils would consider unjust treatment of a character and base the discussion on why this can be considered legitimate in another culture.

The third of the interviewees, Anna, stresses one particular aspect of the second goal that the pupils should: “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” (Skolverket).

I think the key word there which is hard to achieve is the comparison [...] what happens is that if you want to do a comparison between two different cultures you need to put a lot of focus on just that. I do look at culture and living standards and similar things like that but I don't do the comparison because that word just gives me a headache when it comes to planning classes. (Anna)

Anna points out that this certain aspect of the goal is very time consuming and that it makes the planning difficult, this leads to the question of prioritisation.

5.1.3 How do teachers value and prioritize teaching culture within the English subject? In regard to this research question it is difficult not to lead the interviewee towards expressing positive attitudes on teaching culture within English. The first interviewee talks about material and time resources as a big obstacle for teaching culture.
I love literature and I do think it's important. Reading is the most important thing you do at school, but you have to have the material, and you have to adapt the material, if you got a problem with some students if they've got dyslexia or lack of motivation and so forth, you have to adapt the material for them. You have to individualise and you need to have the tools. Or you can't do anything about it. (Alice)

So what the interviewee says is that it is important to understand that a class is heterogeneous. Even if the syllabus goal says that the pupils should learn about culture through literature it is important to individualise the material and in order to do that the teacher needs the necessary tools. These tools consist of the time to plan the lessons and material resources, such as access to literature. Alice works at a private school and finds the lack of a library at the school to be a big setback. She disapproves of the fact that free schools are not required to have one. So Alice is forced to prioritize since there is not enough resources and because her pupils are not motivated by reading literature.

Anna does not work extensively with literature when she teaches culture because of time resources "I think it's more important for them to be able to write things like this (words like their and there etc) correctly. For them to get the grammar, get the speaking part and so on before discussing culture, I nudge by a little in English A but not a lot of emphasis on that specific aspect." (Anna). She mentions the importance of "filling in the gaps" before moving on to teaching within a cultural context. Further she finds the idea of studying and comparing culture more naturally falls within the social science subjects.
5.1.4 To what extent is culture from other parts of the English-speaking world included in the course English A?

The study of culture from other parts of the English-speaking world is definitely included when it comes to the curriculum at the school where Alice works. Though in this case emphasis is on other aspects since material resources and planning time is not enough to work extensively with literature. She works with a project where the chef students explore different foods from different parts of the world, but they do not only study culture in terms of food but also lifestyles etc. When the interview turned to the subject of multicultural classes Alice mentioned both negative and positive aspects. A problem that could occur with pupils of different ethnical backgrounds are linguistic differences. “You explain the language from a Swedish perspective […] But they do not have enough knowledge in Swedish and they do not see English as you do.” The interviewee means that the obvious way of teaching a second language is from the perspective of a first. The interviewee further mentions that it is possible to motivate pupils with different backgrounds by attempting to emphasize their culture. “It's possible to have a multicultural view in the subject. It depends on what kind of dialogue you have with your students, if you are talking to them and if you are open-minded and flexible” (Alice). The interviewee again emphasises the importance of knowing the pupil and the importance of being able to adapt material to them.

Anna does not include postcolonial literature on the curriculum for English A and not for the B course either, she answers: “I have Britain and America but I've been thinking about it, but if you look at famous authors from other countries, I am
not really familiar with any major authors from for instance Australia, New Zealand, India or maybe South Africa.” (Anna). She addresses familiarity as a reason not to include postcolonial works as she thinks it is important to start with authors that are familiar to the pupils.

5.1.5. What methods do teachers use to teach culture from different parts of the English speaking world?

Judging from the syllabus it may seem that literature is the predetermined method to use when teaching culture at upper secondary school. It actually leaves little room for interpretation and may in this way cripple the teacher since it determines what method to use but not how to use it. Alice spoke earlier about how hard it was to motivate pupils to read literature. “Yes and you may of course not use only literature, I would say you may use film when you want to show culture”(Alice) The interviewee argues about the language authenticity in films, the pupils get to hear authentic, regional spoken English. So the method does according to the interviewee not have to be by reading literature. Alice emphasises motivational work. When asked the question: Have you thought about including postcolonial literature when you teach? Alice answers: “If I was working with other students I would. I would adapt my teaching in another way because they don't normally like to read. I would say they hate literature” (Alice). In such a situation it would seem like an obstacle to motivate the students by using a teaching method and material that they are not interested in. In other words, judging by the answers from the first interview an important aspect that teachers have to consider when interpreting and actualising the syllabus goals is the fact that classes are not homogenous. In every class pupils are on different levels of knowledge and have different ways of obtaining knowledge and
areas of interest. Therefore, to use literature when teaching culture is perhaps not always the best option in terms of a teaching method.

As mentioned Arlene teaches literature at the IB-program so she is far more experienced in the matter. She does not teach English A but has much experience when it comes to teaching culture through literature. Arlene works with the SCASI-method in her classes. “SCASI is how to approach literature so that you have style, characterisation, action or plot and setting, three settings and I for idea or themes” (Arlene). On the curriculum of the literature course that Arlene teaches there are a number of postcolonial books. She says: “If it's a postcolonial lens your putting on then you have to come away from Heart of darkness\textsuperscript{1}, you must come away from all of these typical ones, Things fall apart\textsuperscript{2} is a very good one because it shows both sides.” (Arlene).

Arlene says that the most important task for the teacher is the motivational work. You need to get the pupils interested in and get them to respect the novel as Arlene put it:

> Once they respect the thing then they are curious and they respect what's inside, because that's the thing, there is no point in reading literature if you're not curious about another world. That's the teacher’s job, to wake that curiosity, the passion, the arguing (Arlene).

So the teacher cannot simply put the novel in the hands of the pupils and expect the work to be done, the motivational work is necessary so that the pupils understand the value of the work they put in while reading the novel. As mentioned Arlene uses the SCASI-method and she explains the way she works with it as such:

The idea with SCASI is setting, you have three main settings: Historical,
geographical, social. The social is the one they can't grapple with because they have to use their imaginations. Are they affluent, are they educated (the characters in the book), imprisoned in an unjust legal system of some kind, religious background and then what do you actually have in terms of bullying and other social issues?

The main idea when using this method is according to Arlene to make the pupils reflect on different aspect and use their imaginations. As mentioned earlier Arlene's view of the syllabus goals is that they are too passive and do not really result in a product. Using this method the pupils must reflect actively in order to make a product. Arlene uses a situation as an example of how you can apply the SCASI-method when working in class. She constructs a figurative scenario where two women are waiting at a bus stop, one of them in make up and daring clothing and the other dressed in a veil. Then the pupils' task is to put on a postcolonial lens and discuss how the situation plays out. With a given setting the pupils create the story and hence through active reflection and by using their imaginations you get a cultural context and a product, a story. “You have to show that the point of view varies intensely […] so you have to be passionate and that (syllabus goal) doesn't leave passion any ground. And you have to juggle you have to dice with it all the time. So the thing is, what do they produce? (Arlene)”.

5.1.6 Summary

When it comes to teaching methods Alice encourages her pupils to reflect profoundly upon what they have read and then write down their reflections. When it comes to teaching culture, that aspect is in a way separated from literature. In English her pupils who are chef students work with a project about food from different parts of
the world and culinary culture. She finds it hard to motivate pupils to read literature and thinks it very important to individualise the material when she teaches.

Alice and Anna who teach at regular Swedish upper secondary schools do not include postcolonial literature when they teach. They would both like to, but point out that there is not enough time for planning and that they need to prioritize other goals. Arlene on the other hand who teaches literature on upper secondary but at an international program works with multiple postcolonial works in class and works with postcolonial lenses to get a cultural context. Some factors that allow her to work more extensively with teaching the postcolonial is first of all that she does not teach English but English literature. Arlene has a lot of experience in teaching literature and is educated in the subject. She finds the syllabus goals for English A too descriptive and that they do not result in a product.

5.1.7. In relation to theory

It became evident while doing the interviews that time and resources makes reading literature problematic in class, but this may also be a result of the teachers' prioritization of the syllabus goals and their interpretation of them. The two teachers Alice and Anna who both work within the Swedish school system had not reflected much about canonicity when it comes to reading literature in class but rather seen the study of culture and literature as two separate aspects. Without a cultural context in the education the pupil's world-view will remain static and perhaps even more cemented in euro-centrism since there is no ongoing discussion or perspective from other cultures. It would be safe to say that the absence of a cultural context will not disrupt or dislocate the idea that the own culture has status in an unspoken cultural hierarchy. As treated in the theoretical framework section, culture and identity interact with each other. Culture has an important impact on how a person perceives
him-/herself and others. If there is no shift of perspective the view of a different culture as other will remain and there will be no increased understanding of it.

Especially in the case of Anna, canonicity becomes evident since she strictly focuses on reading famous and established authors in class. She supports her choice of material partly with the idea that from a historical perspective the history of English literature is mostly British and therefore is prioritized before authors from other countries and regions from the English-speaking world. As mentioned both Alice and Anna claim that their time in class does not allow them to study foreign culture deeper than just on the surface.

The opinion that Alice and Anna share, that the pupils need other aspects before moving on to learning about culture, brings up the question: Does language education really have to deal explicitly with language in terms of grammar or vocabulary? Even if the level of the knowledge in a class is not that wide it should perhaps not be the most effective method to isolate the language from a context. Language exists naturally in a cultural context and to isolate it to deal explicitly with practising for example prepositions on a work sheet, an example of “filling in the gaps”, might have a negative effect on the coherence of the English course.

On commenting the syllabus goals and talking about the idea of comparing cultures Arlene said “It's just like, you will understand different cultures through a postcolonial lens [Ironically speaking about syllabus goals]. Well, you need to know an awful lot about it first to understand anything. (Arlene).” What she means is that one must understand that to achieve this goal is both time and work consuming and that the goal itself does not really give a hint on how to achieve it. In order to do a cultural comparison the pupils do need a lot of knowledge about the cultures they are about to discuss. To once again quote Huggan, this might be an aspect where
postcolonialism is "inviting cross-cultural comparisons but with insufficient cultural knowledge"(2). So in this case the interviewees share the opinion that it takes a lot of knowledge about a culture in order to compare it with another.

5.2 The questionnaires

The questionnaires have been compiled and the results are illustrated in diagrams to increase readability. Each question asked in the questionnaire has its own diagram to create a comprehensive picture of the survey's outcome.

The diagram below illustrates the results of the statement "I think it is important that you within the English subject get to learn about parts of the English-speaking world apart from Britain and the US.

![Bar chart](image)

*Figure 1: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axis.*

As the diagram illustrates most pupils agree with the statement. None of the
participants have answered “not at all” or “don’t know”. In other words the survey suggests that pupils do find it important to learn about the English-speaking world and shows that there is an awareness of the spread of the English language among the pupils.

The diagram below illustrates the answer rate of the statement “I think it is interesting to study cultures from other countries”

\[ \text{Figure 2: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axle.} \]

As the diagram illustrates, most of the participating pupils finds studying culture interesting. The participants who marked in “Not at all” or “Largely not” were all born in Sweden, most of them boys. While most of the participants with descent from other countries marked in “Largely” or “Fully”. Pupils of different national ancestry seem more interested in studying culture from other countries.

The diagrams below all illustrate the answer of the statement “I think I will have use
of my knowledge of different cultures in:"

My future professional life:

![Graph showing different levels of knowledge in professional life]

*Figure 3: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axis.*

For future studies:

![Graph showing different levels of knowledge in future studies]

*Figure 4: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axis.*
In figures 3-5 the answer rates largely illustrate that the pupils think that they will benefit from their cultural knowledge. The answer rate is distributed relatively evenly in all three scenarios though it seems that the participants think that they will benefit more from cultural knowledge in future studies.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate of the statement “You learn about different parts of the English-speaking world in the course English A”
Figure 6: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axle.

As the diagram illustrates the answering rate for this statement was relatively evenly spread over the different alternatives. Compared to figure 1 which illustrates the pupils interest in learning about culture, the answers to the statement in figure 6 seem to agree less. Accordingly one might say that the pupils are interested in learning about culture but that their interest is not entirely met by the material within the English A course.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate of the statement “I think that it is mostly within the English subject I learn about culture in other countries ”

Figure 7: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axle
The answering rate in this statement is rather ambivalent and does not really depict which direction the participants opinions are leaning towards. The statement might have been conceived differently than intended. The pupils who filled in “partly” might have meant that they think that they partly learn about culture within the English subject. As opposed to saying that they partly agree with the statement in question.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate of the statement “To read literature is a good way of developing your English skills”

![Diagram]

Figure 8: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axle

As the diagram illustrates most pupils agree with the statement, only one disagrees completely. Most of the participants who marked “fully” in the statement are girls, while the “partly” alternative was selected mostly by boys.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate of the statement “In the English A course we read books by authors from other English-speaking countries Apart from Britain and the US.”
**Figure 9: The answer count for the statement above is read on the X-axis**

The diagram shows a relatively ambivalent answering rate since many of the participants are pupils of the interviewees. The interviewees have answered that they do not read postcolonial or works by other from English-speaking countries apart from Britain and US. Still some of the interviewees' pupils have agreed with the statement. Seventeen of the pupils have marked “Largely” in this statement even though their teachers have made clear that they do not read any postcolonial literature during the English A course. A reasonable explanation might be that the participants have not thoroughly reflected over this statement or perhaps that they have misinterpreted it.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate to the question “How many books do you read in the English A course?”
Figure 10: The amount of books read is on the x-axle

The diagram illustrates that most participants have read 1 to 2 books during the English A course. Four participants have written that they have read 3 to 4 books during the course. In this case, their teachers have said that they only read one book during the course. The question explicitly states that it refers to books that the pupils have read in school and not at in their spare time. A possible explanation can be that these participants have not read through the questions thoroughly enough and just marked at random.

The diagram below illustrates the answering rate to whether or not the amount of books read within the course is enough.
The few participants who marked in 3-4 in Figure 10 have all marked in “Enough”. Obviously few of the participants think that they read to many books throughout the course.

5.2.1 Summary

The results of answers to the statements in the questionnaires mostly point to a positive attitude towards studying culture within the English subject. Surprisingly few of the participants indicate that they have a negative attitude to the subject. In some cases the answering rate was ambivalent and result of that is that nothing can really be said about the general attitude towards these statements based on the survey. In a few cases some participants marked deviating answers that can be results of having misinterpreted the statement or not taking the time necessary to reflect on the statements which in some cases deal with rather complicated issues. As mentioned the results indicate that in general the participants think that learning about foreign cultures is important. It seems though that the participants do not agree to the same extent with the statement “You learn about different parts of the English-speaking world in the course English A” illustrated in figure 6. That diagram does not show a completely negative opinion of the statement but in relation to the positive attitude
depicted in *figure 1* and *figure 2* it sheds light on the idea that pupils want to learn more about foreign culture.

Judging by the results of the questionnaires it also seems like pupils generally have a positive attitude to the idea of learning English by reading literature. Only a handful of the participants disagreed with the statement: "To read literature is a good way of developing your English skills" illustrated in *Figure 8*.

### 6. Concluding discussion

When comparing the results from the interviews with the ones from the questionnaires what is most striking is the difference between what the teachers think their pupils think and the answers in the questionnaires. Two of the interviewees, Alice and Anna, found it hard to motivate the pupils to read literature and shared the idea that the pupils did not like literature. In the questionnaires however the participants agree to great extent that reading literature is a good way to improve their English and around 25 per cent thought they did not read enough. An explanation could be that it might be hard for a teacher to get a general view of what their pupils think, perhaps only some pupils express their opinions openly and there for they will colour the perception of the collective attitude, the general opinion in the class. If we go back to the section with theoretical framework and the idea that culture is created socially. Within a class or group certain norms and values are constructed, there for in a group formation some pupils may not be comfortable with expressing a deviating opinion. In the questionnaire on the other hand, they are anonymous and can express their opinions freely. It is an important note that the pupils participating in the questionnaire were not Anna's pupils and only to some extent Alice's. The number of
participants may not either be enough for an apprehension of pupils’ attitudes in
general but the differences are still striking which is worth thinking about.

Another eye-catching thing about the questionnaire was the pupils’ attitudes
towards studying culture. In general the pupils seem to be of the opinion that it is
important to learn about foreign culture and that knowledge of foreign culture could
be useful to them in their future professional life as well as for future studies and
everyday life. The pupils did not agree to the same extent to the statement “You
learn about different parts of the English-speaking world in the course English A”.
The answer to the question; “Why study foreign cultures should be on the curriculum
for the English course?”

Looking back to the theoretical framework section again and Homi Bhabha,
culture is a crucial factor in the construction of identity. It is through culture and in
the interstices between them that we create our identity, our ideology. Knowledge of
other cultures is there for very important since it allows pupils to understand people
with separate culture, identity and ideology better. When it comes to the question
How can the teacher have a cultural context in the English subject? The answer can
be a bit more versatile than within the syllabus. The syllabus more or less states that
reading postcolonial literature is the means of how to gain knowledge of foreign
culture. Reading literature is of course not only a means but partly a goal in itself, in
reality however, there are other ways of acquiring this knowledge. In a heterogeneous
group perhaps one method is not suitable for every pupil. What is also important is
the motivational work, in order to read in class the pupils must first be interested in
what they are about to read. Other ways of learning about culture could be by
studying it from the perspective of food or something else that specifically meets the
interest of the particular pupils. Another way of studying culture that might suit
pupils who are not as skilled in reading could be to watch films. Films can supply authentic spoken English which can benefit pupils with different interests and skills, as an alternative to reading.
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