Degree project

**Worlds Apart?**
- A comparative study of the Swedish and Japanese syllabus of English
Abstract

This paper is a comparative syllabus study that looks into the differences and similarities between the Swedish syllabus for English education and the Japanese syllabus for English education. By using White’s theory of the Type A and the Type B syllabus, which states that syllabi can be divided into two major groups based on their inherent structure, the goal is to compare the two syllabi against one another. The Type A is more traditional whereas the Type B is more experimental. The method being used is a qualitative content analysis method which categorizes the content of the syllabi into different language skills and content. The comparison itself is hermeneutic at its core, and it interprets the data against the backdrop of White’s theory. The study shows that both syllabi are of the Type A nature, although the Swedish syllabus takes influences from the Type B syllabus in the form of less authoritarian teacher-role and increased student influence. As for content, the Japanese syllabus is more focused on grammar and pronunciation, as well as on fostering a positive attitude not only towards English but also towards other cultures and countries. The Swedish syllabus on the other hand is more topic-oriented and has very little that is directly referring to grammar. This difference in the two is likely due to the position of the English language in each country’s society as well as similarities between English and Swedish and the difference between English and Japanese, the latter which requires education to focus more on correct pronunciation and grammar. Some similarities that they share are that they are notional-functional in structure, i.e. that they focus on topics and functions of language. Some of the topics overlap for both countries, such as situations regarding students’ daily lives, but the Swedish syllabus has a more diverse arsenal of topics that the students are to be taught.

Keywords: Syllabus research, Comparative study, Japan, Sweden, English Education, Type A and Type B Syllabus.
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1. Introduction

Syllabus research is not a particularly new field. Concerns over developing and releasing new syllabi have existed since at least the 1970s and many of the inherent problems still exist today (White, 1988:1). Because the syllabus occupies such a powerful position in language education and is an integral part of language teaching, it often comes under scrutiny in an attempt to improve upon it. With the emergence of guidelines such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has had a global effect on language teaching, the importance of syllabi research and awareness has only increased. Before moving on, there might be some uncertainty of what is actually constitutes as a syllabus, and how it differs from a curriculum. According to Nunan (Nunan, 1988:5) there is some disagreement about the nature of the syllabus, but he explains that in the narrowest sense, a syllabus is primarily concerned with the selection and grading of content, although with the rise of newer teaching methods this definition has come under criticism since it does not account for language tasks. However, that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Although certain types of syllabi have become more prominent and popular with teachers over time, there is still not yet any kind of “standard” syllabus. White mentions how Taylor (Taylor, 1970:32 cited in White, 1988:3) found that there was considerable variation among different syllabi, some being only one or two pages, whereas others exceeded one hundred. For example, the Swedish syllabus is 14 pages long, including the subject’s introduction and aim (Skolverket, 2013:1-14). The Japanese equivalent on the other hand, is only seven pages (MEXT, 2003:1-7). This is one of many differences that are immediately noticeable. Perhaps the most important difference lies in the actual content of the syllabi themselves, and it is those differences, and perhaps even similarities, that this paper has addressed.

The data for this research will consist of the Swedish syllabus and the Japanese syllabus for English in the upper secondary school, two countries that are far away from one another, both geographically and culturally.

In today’s global climate where ideas and information are constantly exchanged the need to look into other countries’ ways and traditions might be a source for improvement. Hopefully the results can be used to further improve both teachers’ and researchers’ understanding of how different syllabi are constructed and organized. By comparing the syllabi there is also a chance that both current and future teachers may find something that is interesting to think about and hopefully even apply in their own teaching. Finally, this paper
might act as a window from which we can get an idea of the other country’s educational system, increasing awareness of how education is conducted in each respective country.

1.1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to illuminate the differences, and even the similarities between the respective countries’ English language teaching syllabi. In order not to be overwhelmed with all the information and data that is available, the questions are designed to limit the scope of the research to a feasible level. Thus, the following research questions being addressed are:

• In what ways does the Japanese syllabus differ, if at all, from the Swedish one?

• In what ways are the two syllabi similar to one another?

Since I am Swedish myself, I will be using the Swedish syllabus as a point of reference and compare it to the Japanese to see in what ways they are both different and similar. However, if I were Japanese I would have done the opposite; using the Japanese syllabus as the point of reference. Both of the syllabi are the English translation from their respective language, though this in itself can be a source of problem since certain passages might have been phrased differently. A more thorough presentation of the syllabi can be found under the materials section.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. A brief overview of syllabus research

The study and research of the syllabus is closely tied to the development of the syllabus as it progressed during the 20th century. With the rise of English as global language and its use in business and commerce the need for mass provision of foreign language education only increased (White, 1988:8-10). Language education was initially split into two different traditions, the Modern Language Teaching (MLT) and the English Language Teaching (ELT) whereas the former had its origins in German and French language teaching. These two schools of thought would also diverge geographically, with the American ELT-tradition being distinguished by the audiolingual method which would become the most prevalent method after World War 2 (ibid:13). Rooted in the military’s need for personnel who could speak foreign languages, the audiolingual method with its focus on drill-exercises and emphasis on
the teacher was influential in how syllabi were designed in the US (ibid:14-15).

In Britain the focus was starting to move in favor of situational language curricula that emphasized the need for communicative competence. Language was more than just a collection of structures; the social setting played a huge role in how the language was used. This was labeled Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In the 1970’s there were concerns over meaning rather that structure which lead to the Council of Europe creating the Threshold Level project, initiated in 1971 (White, 1988:17). This new approach called the ‘notional-functional’ put emphasis on the notion that all languages expressed the same meaning but realized it (in language) with different structures. Nunan mentions that teachers often become confused when they for the first time come across the terms functional and notional, so he clarifies the terms by describing functions as the communicative purposes for which we use language and the notion as the conceptual meanings (objects, entities, etc.) (Nunan, 1988:35).

The first syllabi of this type had no structure on the topics and functions; they were merely a checklist of grammatical items and topics (White, 1988:75-76). Organization of content is a crucial part of language teaching, because the syllabus is to be viewed a system, and in a system some parts fit with other parts and vice versa. There was a need for content to be graded, i.e. organized into a logical system. The aspect of grading can be itself divided into two separate parts, staging and sequencing, and just briefly explained one can say that staging is concerned with the amount of content at any given time, and sequencing is the order in which it is presented. The order is usually based on the frequency of common words and phrases, which can be determined by studying corpora.

It thus became possible to create meaning-based syllabus that could be specified for any language, and the group in the Council of Europe that worked on the Threshold Level project started working on a ‘common core’ which all learners were required to learn before specializing further in any given language (White, 1988:17).

According to White (White, 1988:17), there were two important outcomes of this project that would have lasting impact on syllabi design. The first one was the development of ‘needs analysis’, that is, what kind of language abilities a student requires in order to partake in or perform certain roles (ibid:84). This was investigated by teachers or planners, and the specifications that they found are what form the basis of the language syllabus. Thus, one could say that the needs analysis specifies the ends of what the learner hopes to achieve (ibid:17).

The second outcome was that meaning was going to be the central foundation of
the syllabus rather than structure. To implement this posed new problems never encountered before. Instead of having headings in the course books and syllabi like ‘The present tense’ we now have headings more akin to ‘Expressing opinions’. The impact that this has had on syllabus design has been enormous, to such an extent that current syllabus designers take them for given (White, 1988:18).

No syllabus design is perfect however and Nunan states that some of the criticism that can be directed towards the functional-notional syllabus is that selection, grading and sequencing of content has become increasingly more complex, as the content has to be of value to the learner in not only a linguistic sense but also in a communicative sense. Grading language functions is also quite difficult since there is no objective way to decide that the language function of ‘apologizing’ would be more difficult than ‘requesting’ for example (Nunan, 1988:37).

Other researchers have looked at the syllabus not from a design standpoint but from the effect it can have on the classroom and on students. Matejka and Kurke (Matejka and Kurke, 1994:42-43) saw the syllabus as a powerful document since it acts as a contract, a communication device, a plan of action and a cognitive map for students. They also described syllabi as ‘preventative medicine’ that should impress the students with its layout (ibid, 1994:115-117). The way the syllabus is designed can set the tone and expectations for the class in which it is used (Singham, 2005:50-57). There is more to syllabi than just these things however, and one theory which also forms the basis of this paper is outlined in the paragraph below.

2.2. The Type A and Type B Syllabus

According to White syllabi can be divided into two separate groups: The Type A syllabus and the Type B syllabus (White, 1988:44-45). Below is a table created by White (ibid:44) which highlights the differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type A: What is to be learnt?</th>
<th>Type B: How is it to be learnt?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventionist</td>
<td>Non-interventionist (Left empty by White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External to the learner</td>
<td>Internal to the learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other directed</td>
<td>Inner directed or self-fulfilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined by authority</td>
<td>Negotiated between learners and teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White does not clarify or explain some of the terms, which makes it a bit difficult to explain them without knowing exactly what he meant, although one can make assumptions. For example, the term ‘Other directed’ probably refers to that the content is not directed by the students but by the teacher or the syllabus. The phrase ‘external to the learner’ could mean that the students’ opinions and feelings towards subject are irrelevant, although it is hard to say. The other statements are bit easier to figure out, such as authority-driven and the teacher as a decision-maker. Subject versus process emphasis would be the knowledge of the subject whereas the latter would put more focus on the process of learning the language.

The key difference between the two types is which approach to learning they adopt. The Type A syllabus is interventionist in nature: its main focus lies on pre-determined linguistic content or skill-objectives that the students are to acquire. The teacher’s role in a Type A syllabus is to select and grade content and to act as an authoritative symbol (White, 1988:95). The Type B syllabus on the other hand would be non-interventionist as it is more concerned with having students immersed in real-life communication without any artificially made or pre-selected borders that are imposed on the language learning process (ibid:45). Here the teacher works together with students when it comes to deciding on the content, and whose role is more of a mentor that supervises the students’ development (ibid). One could summarize the differences as the Type A being concerned with “What?”, and the Type B with “How?”.

Another feature of the Type A syllabus is that it contributes to analytical L2-knowledge i.e., knowing about the language, its grammatical functions and such. The Type B syllabus on the other hand is more geared towards increasing students’ ability to produce unplanned communication where there is no time to think about what is going to be said.
According to White (ibid:47), the Type B syllabus is more centered on the learner and that these kinds of syllabi aim to recreate ‘natural’ language acquisition, i.e. the way a person would learn a language by being in a new-language environment. He states that if the end-goal of language learning is competence in the target language, then a Type B syllabus probably is preferable. However, if priority is given to the language as a product (analytical L2 knowledge) then a Type A syllabus is to prefer (ibid:110). He summarizes his views on the two by stating that a hybrid syllabus is probably likely to arise, one which satisfies the need of both the teacher and the student, although he also states that some inherent traits of the Type A and Type B syllabi are unworkable when combined, such as the pre-determination of content which the Type B syllabus tries to avoid (ibid:110).

The syllabus types can be further divided into what kind of design-base they have, as outlined below (White, 1988:46). Note that White originally used a tree-diagram, but due to the difficulty of making such a diagram I have opted for a normal cell-based table, which as a result has left some of the cells empty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form: Structural focus</td>
<td>Language:</td>
<td>Process: Learning focus, learner-led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receptive/Productive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation: Contextual focus</td>
<td>Learning: Skill acquisition focus</td>
<td>Procedural: Cognitive focus, Task-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Informational focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional/Functional Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to White (ibid:47) the vast majority of today’s already-released course books are based on content-type notional-functional syllabi, as both teachers and students seem to be reluctant to break away from the already established tradition (ibid:47). One could hypothesize that it is probably likely that both the Swedish and Japanese syllabus abide by the content-type functional/notional syllabus, but it remains to be seen.
2.3. Comparative Language Research
A comparative language study was carried out by the European Commission in 2011, in which 14 countries participated. In the test students in the final year of upper secondary school took a test to assess their language competence in the two most taught European languages in their country (Torstensson, 2012:13). Sweden, which was a participating country, had English and Spanish as their two most taught languages, and Swedish students scored the highest in English compared to other non-English speaking European countries (ibid). This study was conducted within the European Union however and involved countries that were within the European sphere of influence where English has a more established role than in Asia.

2.4. English education in Sweden
Although education in foreign languages had been available in Sweden since the 18th century it was not until the school edict of 1807 (1807 skolordning, my translation) that modern languages were being brought up on the school agenda. Before that you had to enroll into either what was known as Trivial School, a kind of secondary grade school which offered primary education to teenagers or upper secondary school (Th. Westrin, et al., 1919:784). These kinds of schools only offered education in Latin, Greek and Hebrew (Larsson and Westberg, 2011:259). In 1839 English became a mandatory subject, but only in select schools in the country: it would take until the 1850’s before modern languages had a real breakthrough in the public school system (ibid:264). Latin was being pushed aside in favor of French or German and the modern foreign languages could for the first time be omitted from the students’ curriculum. With this emerged the so-called reallinje, a program at upper secondary school in which the students studied English instead of Latin (ibid:265).

At the turn of the 19th century German had overtaken Latin as the main modern foreign language in the Swedish school system. However, English would rise from being a fringe-subject taught to the privileged few to become a core subject in schools due to a variety reasons. One reason was the Allied victory in World War 2 which would propel the US into having a dominant role on the global stage. Since a lot of radio shows and TV programs were in English it was argued that not only did it have more practical value than German, it would also be perceived as being more democratic, due to the fact that the previous languages (German and French) still had connotations with society’s elite (Larsson and Westberg, 2011:268).

Today, Sweden consistently ranks amongst the top countries when it comes to
English proficiency in the world (Education First, 2015). Whether this is tied to the schools’ efforts, media and entertainment in Sweden or a combination of both is hard to say.

2.5. English education in Japan

The history of foreign language education in Japan dates back to 1853, when Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the U.S. Navy arrived in the bay of Edo (present-day Tokyo) and demanded that the Japanese revoke their 200-year old closed country policy called sakoku (Aspinall, 2013:38). The Japanese, knowing that they could not match the West technologically agreed on the terms and the country became open for foreigners for the first time in centuries. With the prospect of acquiring Western technology and ideas the Japanese realized that they had to learn several foreign languages in order to be able to interact with foreigners and to be able to travel to America and the different countries of Europe. These trips would be necessary if they were to be able to modernize (ibid:39-40).

As Japan developed into a modern country and became a powerful player on the international stage it started to reject Western values in favor of a more nationalistic approach which would later culminate in the Russo-Japanese war, the invasion of Manchuria and finally, World War 2. A result of the rejection of Western help and aid was that language education became neglected, and many of the foreigners already in the country had little actual language teaching capabilities and mostly conducted language classes with the help of interpreters (ibid:47-50). In 1922, Harold E. Palmer, a leading expert in the field arrived to Japan and was appointed Director for the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET) (2013:50-51). Palmer wanted the Japanese to actually speak English, but his new and radical thoughts clashed with the already established tradition of language teaching. Aspinall notes that “The frustrations Palmer and his assistants experienced in trying to introduce oral communicative English activities in Japanese classrooms would have looked very familiar to a time-travelling ALT\(^1\) or gaikokujin kyōshi\(^2\) from the twenty-first century”. This is a pattern that we will see repeat itself in more modern times (2013:51).

Fast-forward into the future, in the past 30 years English language education has been a hot topic in Japan. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan, (henceforth MEXT) has been very clear that the English level of Japanese citizens has to increase in order for Japan to survive and compete on the global arena

\(^1\) Assistant Language Teacher, a teacher who teaches English in tandem with a native Japanese English teacher.

\(^2\) Foreign teacher, lit. Outside-person teacher.
In the 1980’s the MEXT issued new curriculum guidelines that demanded more and better English education with an emphasis on the communicative aspect. This tied in with the government’s policy of ‘internationalization’, one of the buzzwords of the decade (ibid:133).

By the 90’s their goals had become even more ambitious; they wanted all Japanese children to be able to engage in conversation with foreigners. By 2008 the government announced that by 2013 all English classes should be taught solely in English (Willis and Rappleye, 2011:133). Willis and Rappleye note that for the uninitiated onlooker it would seem that English education in Japan was in a constant upward trajectory of ambition and success, but in reality these promises of reforms had achieved little (ibid:133). The limited impact of these reforms seemed to stem from division within the MEXT itself, although it is difficult to give a definite answer since the organization lacks transparency which allows outsiders to scrutinize their work. One of these disagreements was the fact that during the 1980’s with the new curriculum there was to be an influx of foreigners to teach at schools across the country in order to expose students to the language as spoken by a native. Since the new curriculum emphasized oral communication it only seemed logical to have foreigners come in. The division was not caused by the introduction of a more communication-laden curriculum, but rather that there was apprehension over the fact that a large influx of foreigners would cause disruption within the schools (Ibid:134). Experienced bureaucrats within the MEXT could still remember during the 50’s and 60’s when foreign teachers’ methods and way of thinking had clashed with the Japanese teachers’ (Ibid:135).

Their solution was to make sure that the foreigners who came in this time around would have minimal language teaching abilities as to preserve the equilibrium within the classrooms, the consequence being that the newly arrived foreigners ended up merely being used as ‘human tape recorders’ (Willis and Rappleye, 2011:135).

Willis and Rappleye (Willis and Rappleye, 2011:135) state the following: “One set of problems continuously encountered by the MEXT in its efforts to improve English language education in Japan stems from its desire to improve language teaching for everybody” (ibid:135). This symptomatic desire to have a uniform system that does not discriminate anyone regardless of geographical location or social status whilst lacking the resources to implement it is one issue that has plagued the government’s attempts. With the 2020 Summer Olympics looming on the horizon, which Japan will host, there is a scramble to try and improve the country’s English level to prepare for the huge influx of foreign nationals and to avoid international humiliation (Gaijinpot, 2016).
3. Material and Method

3.1. Material

3.1.1. Primary sources

The primary data was comprised of the Swedish syllabus for English in Upper secondary school, taken from Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) and the Japanese equivalent, accessed from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). These two syllabi (both in PDF-format) form the basis of this research paper.

3.1.2. The Swedish Syllabus

The Swedish syllabus for English at upper secondary school is 14 pages long and is divided into several sections, beginning with the introduction, the aim of the subject and what kind of opportunities the students should be given in order to develop their English. Below that is a run-down of the individual courses consisting of English 5, English 6 and English 7 and what their core content is and the following knowledge requirements for each grade.

3.1.3. The Japanese Syllabus

The Japanese syllabus appears to be divided into different documents as the one which states the subject aim and content does not contain any knowledge requirements to assist in grading. Whether this section was not included in the English translation of the syllabus or if it exists as a separate document is hard to say due to the fact that the MEXT’s homepage is written in Japanese. The version used as material in this paper is therefore only seven pages long, half the length of the Swedish syllabus. It is however divided into more subsections which includes the courses English Communication I, II, III, English Expression I, II and English Conversation. There is also a small paragraph which covers other foreign languages, but it merely states that “Instruction for foreign languages other than English should follow the Objectives and Contents for each subject stated in I through VII and Article 3” (MEXT, 2003:5). Unlike the Swedish syllabus which has all its content tailored to each specific English course, the Japanese syllabus has, in addition to course-specific content, a common content section that covers a wide range of topics that are to be used and combined in an effort to achieve course objectives. Examples of this includes situations where fixed expressions are used, such as when shopping and talking on the phone and situations that are
of relevance to the student’s own life, such as after-school activities (ibid). This section also has a part dedicated to commonly occurring grammatical items, as well as functions of language such as ‘requesting’ and ‘apologizing’. The syllabus also includes a small section called Treatment of content which gives instructions to teacher on how to use the material.

3.2. Method
For this research I have used two methods that work in tandem with one another. The first method is called qualitative content analysis and is used to sort out and categorize the data. The second method is a hermeneutic and comparative method that was chosen in order to analyze and compare the content of the two syllabi. The act of collecting and presenting the data is therefore divided in two steps: the first includes categorizing the content of the syllabi and the second is the interpretation and comparison of it.

3.2.1. Qualitative Content Analysis
Qualitative content analysis is described as a method used to systematically describe the qualitative meaning of data (Flick, 2013:170). The advantages of this method over other qualitative analysis methods are threefold: it reduces the amount of data, it is systematic and it is flexible (ibid). One thing that sets it apart from discourse analysis is that it works with pre-defined research questions. It also does not necessarily concern itself with the implicit meaning in the same way that discourse analyses do (Research Gate, 2015). When using this method the researcher has to focus on aspects of meaning that are related to the research questions, and divide them into categories, which can then be organized under larger coding frames. The categories themselves should always at least be partially data-driven that is, the categories make sense with regards to the collected data. This is also what makes this method so flexible: the coding frames align with the material. The number of frames and categories (or even subcategories) is limited to how much the researcher can handle (ibid: 171).

Once these frames and categories have been established each and every single part of the material that is relevant to the research questions has to be scrutinized in order to gather data using as many different angles as possible, as this helps preventing analytical tunnel vision. The data analysis is then carried out in a set sequence i.e. step by step, which starts with collecting the data, sorting it out and then assigning it to its respective category. (Flick, 2013: 171).

The syllabi comprise the data for this paper the frames and categories must
match that content. Since the scope of this paper is relatively limited and only deals with the Swedish and Japanese syllabus of English, both which might have somewhat similar content, there are only two over-arching frames: the Japanese syllabus frame and the Swedish syllabus frame. These two frames have the same number and types of categories as to make the data gathering and analysis as clear and sound as possible. The following categories will be used:

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Grammar
- Realia

These categories match the four main skills of language education (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and also include two other topics that can be considered important for language acquisition, namely grammar and realia. Although the Swedish syllabus does not explicitly state the word ‘grammar’ anywhere in the syllabus, it is quite prominent in the Japanese syllabus, and disregarding it for that single fact could be detrimental for the final results of this paper. This is not to say that grammar is disregarded in Sweden, but it might be that due to the relatively high level of English amongst the population grammar plays a minor role because there is already a high degree of mastery. Reading and listening are called *receptive* skills because they are the means of which we receive information. Writing and speaking are *productive* skills due to the fact that it is the student that produces these. Grammar could be considered to be both receptive and productive since you need grammar in order to both produce speech and text as well as to understand it. The last category, called *realia* deals with content that is not grammatical, functional, or skill-based. Rather, realia has to do with things from the real world, usually items that are used in order to deepen the students understanding of other cultures and real-life situations (Merriam-Webster). It does not have to be items however, but can also include the information and facts about the culture/cultures of the language which is being learnt. In this category there is only information that deals with learning about culture and all that it encompasses, save for language.
3.2.2. Comparative Hermeneutic Method

The basis of the interpretation and comparison between the two syllabi is rooted in hermeneutics: the science of interpretation. Hermeneutics is often used in qualitative research to analyze texts and make sense of what is written (Fejes and Thornberg, 2015:71). However, as with many methods hermeneutics is not without its flaws, the most glaring being that there is no set operation method concerning the actual interpretation, the reason being that researchers can have different approach methods and different starting prerequisites (ibid:79). Rather than having one uniform interpretation method, hermeneutics is divided between three slightly different schools of thought, which are the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ (my translation), where the researcher can look at the structure of a text, in which they divide the text into different sections (such as word frequency) and based on that make judgements. This angle has elements of quantitative analyzes. The second hermeneutic approach is to try and understand the feelings and intentions of the author who created the data which is being analyzed, and the initial disposition (experiences, opinions) of the researcher plays a huge part in this method (ibid:72-73). Finally there is the third and widest school of hermeneutics which can be regarded as a common theory of interpretation, which pits parts of the data against the whole of a text. If the separate parts do not support the meaning of the whole text then the interpretation is flawed (ibid:74). All of these different hermeneutic angles can and often act as being complementary to one another (ibid:71). The examples given above were just some of the different approaches of hermeneutics, and they all differ slightly from one another.

Knowing which one to use can be tricky, but it is ultimately a matter of what kind of data you are working with. The different schools of thoughts can be seen as being data-dependent, i.e. you choose a specific hermeneutic angle that fits the data you are working with. The one chosen for this study is a mixture of the hermeneutics of suspicion and the common theory of interpretation, as it deals with analyzing parts of a syllabus document, such as words, and compares it with the other syllabus. However, it does not concern itself with counting words or making a quantitative study of it, but rather puts the word into a category. For example, say that we have the phrase “reading is used to facilitate knowledge”. Because the phrase contains the word ‘reading’ it would be placed in the category that deals with that skill.

As mentioned under the qualitative content analysis heading, the comparison is derived from the data that was earlier compiled under the different categories. The data from the respective country’s syllabus has been compared to one another and it is here that the hermeneutic angle was applied. Interpreting the data and comparing it are two different things however, so the act of comparing has been based on White’s theory of the Type A and Type B
syllabus. By applying this theory as the lens of which the data is interpreted through the interpretation become not only more transparent but also more reliable, as there are fixed parameters to work with. This does not however remove the inherent subjectivity that arises when interpreting any material, as there must still be an interpretation to be made by the researcher at the end no matter how rigorous the method or theory was. What it does help with is removing much of the arbitrariness that would otherwise arise if no such theory was in place. So to summarize, the qualitative content data analysis is used to create categories in which the data is sorted into. The data is then interpreted and compared with the other syllabus using a hermeneutic method and White’s syllabus theory.

3.3. Problems and Limitations

The main problem with qualitative content analysis is that although the method reduces the amount of subjective interpretation it does not completely remove it. Confirmation bias is one such problem. When a researcher has confirmation bias he or she has already decided on what the outcome is supposed to be like and is actively trying to find results that can back up this pre-determined notion. This is different from a hypothesis since it does not simply state what they are expected to find, but instead they actively work towards finding very specific results. This is one of many subjective variables that can skew the result if one is not careful and aware of it, in spite of the best of attempts to suppress it. Another problem is that I could not find any documents pertaining to the knowledge requirements for English in the Japanese syllabus. If it exists in a separate document or is just not included is hard to say. In either case, getting hand on the Japanese syllabus was a difficult task since the MEXT website is in Japanese and I only possess cursory knowledge of reading Japanese characters. Although I managed to find a translation of their English syllabus I cannot say if the Japanese syllabus is the latest iteration or if newer, more up-to-date versions exist. This means that the Swedish syllabus might from the onset already be in a favored position, maybe not in slight part that this is also a discussion of emic-etic perspectives. Because I am a Swedish teacher-trainee student I have already been in contact with and have used the Swedish syllabus, which means that I hold an emic (insider) perspective on it. On the other hand, the perspective on the Japanese syllabus is etic (outsider), as I do not belong to that culture. The emic-etic perspective is sometimes used in cross-cultural psychology where problems could arise if researchers used the same instruments without modifications that were first used on, let’s say, culture A and then applied them on culture B (Brislin, 1976:217).

4. Results & Analysis
In this section every heading represents either a skill or a piece of content (such as realia). These are further divided into subheadings which account for the data of each country’s syllabus, which then ends with a comparison between the two. The analysis section is interwoven with the comparison of the syllabi in order to facilitate ease of reading and help following the main points.

4.1. Reading in the Japanese syllabus
Reading, as a receptive skill appears in several different passages in the syllabus. It is most prevalent within the different English Communication courses I, II, III, and only has a limited presence in the English Expression courses. In those courses it only states that students should be able to summarize and present information as well as being able to form their own opinion based on things that they have read. The paragraphs that mentions this also includes the other skills for the same purpose.

The first instance of reading in the Japanese syllabus is found under heading B in the content-section of the course English Communication I which states the following:

“Understanding information, ideas, etc., and grasping the outline and the main points by reading explanations, stories, etc. Reading passages aloud so that the meaning of the content is expressed” (MEXT, 2003:1).

Also included in English Communication I content is for the students to discuss and exchange information based on what they have read, as well as writing short passages. Furthermore, when doing reading, the teacher should direct attention to phrases and sentences that indicate the main point as well as phrases that join clauses and sentences together (MEXT, 2003:2).

English Communication II includes similar reading content to what was quoted earlier, but also includes commentaries, explanations and essays as well as rapid and intensive reading tasks. By following the common content this could include books, newspapers, articles, etc. When providing instructions to the students due attention should now also be given to tables and charts, whilst clarifying points of arguments, evidence, etc. Under the heading Treatment of content they have added the following passage: “Listening and reading while guessing the meaning of unknown words and using background knowledge” (Ibid).

English Communication III is a course designed to further the students’ knowledge of what was taught in English Communication II, and thus we have no more to say about this as it does not contain any new content. How this course is supposed to enhance students’ language skills is uncertain, as the course introduction only states the following:
“To enhance students’ abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., and enable them to use such abilities in their social lives, while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language” (MEXT, 2003:3).

In English Expressions I and II reading has a similar role to what it had in English Communication I and II, namely understanding and expressing meaning. The main points are to summarize and present information, as well as forming one’s own opinion based on what has been read. The heading ‘treatment of content’ states that instructions on speaking and writing should be integrated with the skills listening and reading. How the integration is supposed to be employed is not mentioned, so it is probably safe to assume that it is up to the discretion of the teacher. The dominant role of the teacher is, as explained earlier, a sign that a syllabus is of the Type A variant.

Finally, there is a single course called English Conversation which includes reading in the same way as English Communication I and II did, as used in conjunction with writing, speaking and listening.

Here it is worth reiterating that the Japanese syllabus does not have course-specific content but rather a common core which is to be applied to any of the different English courses. The teacher is expected to pick and combine different topics in order to facilitate learning. It consists of different topics to choose from, such as things that happen in the students’ daily lives, such as home life, activities in the workplace as well as situations were so-called ‘fixed expressions’ are used, such as talking on the phone, when traveling, shopping, etc. It might also be wise to mention that every course also has the following as a course objective: “[…] while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language” (MEXT, 2003:1-6). The reasons for including this as an aim could be several, but one might speculate that it has to do with their low level of English proficiency and that they realize that even if they cannot make all students proficient in the language they can at least foster an interest in wanting to study and use English outside of school. English language schools (Eikaiwa) are a big business in Japan, and a lot of children and teenagers go to one in the evening after the ordinary school is over.³

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eikaiwa_school
4.2. Reading in the Swedish Syllabus

In the Swedish syllabus the first instance of reading is mentioned indirectly: “Understanding spoken and written English, […]” (Skolverket, 2013:1), and can be found under the heading that states the different skills that the students should be given the opportunity to develop whilst being taught English on all levels. In the English 5 course reading can be found under the content regarding the skill reception: “Strategies for listening and reading in different ways and for different purposes” (ibid:3). It is worth pointing out that the syllabus does not necessarily explicitly state the actual word ‘reading’, but rather has content which is processed and used by using reading as a skill. Examples of this include literature and other fiction, as well as texts such as manuals, popular science texts and reports. Reception also encompasses different ways of searching for texts, and selecting and evaluating them, so clearly reading is not just limited to the actual activity itself, but also used for a range of different purposes (such as evaluation) (ibid).

Under knowledge requirements (which again to reiterate, the Japanese syllabus seemed to lack) reading is paraphrased in a manner that states that students should be able to understand written English (which is basically reading comprehension). The different grades are related to the level of understanding that the students can display. For the grade E (the lowest passing grade) the following statement could be connected to reading as a skill: “Students choose texts and spoken language from different media and in a relevant way use the material selected in their own production and interaction.” (ibid:4). For the highest grade, namely A, the criteria is almost the same, but has the addition of “[…] effective and critical way use the selected material […]” (ibid:5).

For the sake of brevity and due to the fact that the Japanese syllabus lacks this section I will not account for all the different knowledge requirements for each grade as it would take up too much space. They are quite similar with only a few key variations in order to facilitate the differences in grades, such as using the words “effective” and “critical” instead of “relative” and “with some certainty”.

English 6 includes even more reading both content-wise and skill-wise. It is much more specific in what kind of content the students should be exposed to: “Themes, ideas, form and content in film and literature; authors and literary periods” (Skolverket, 2013:7). It includes both contemporary and older literature and poems. Granted, poems could also be listened to but it is regarded as a reading activity for the sake of this category. English 6 also include strategies for source-critical approaches when doing reading, which is a step up from English 5 which only stated strategies without a concrete purpose (Ibid:7). It also includes
more abstract use of analyzing written language, such as how attitudes, contexts and styles are expressed in various genres (Ibid:7).

Finally, in English 7 the content becomes even more specialized and complicated, ranging from theoretical and complex areas to societal issues. Reception includes larger texts and being able to understand implied meanings, and how stylistic and rhetorical techniques are applied. One can quite easily see how the complexity and difficulty of the content and the skill-requirements increase with each level of English.

4.3. Comparison of Reading
The Japanese syllabus appears to be much more controlling with regards to both content and activities when compared to the Swedish syllabus. It is quite concerned with what the students are to learn from every language activity, such as understanding the main point of a sentence, how linking phrases are used, etc. Another example would be that the Japanese syllabus mandates that students are to read passages that the meaning of the text is conveyed, whereas the Swedish syllabus merely states that different texts should be used for different purposes. If we were to put the reading-skill of the Japanese syllabus against the backdrop of White’s syllabus theory it would fit in with what he refers to as analytical L2 knowledge, i.e. knowledge that pertains to understanding the structure of a language, or as he puts it: “knowing about the language” (White, 1988:46).

The Swedish syllabus contains more specific information on what should be taught in the classroom, but less in the ways of how it is to be taught. It provides more of a general outline but does not explicitly state any particular works when it comes to reading literature for example. It does contain some cues on what to look for and analyze when using these media. The Japanese syllabus does not even contain the word ‘literature’ at all, but merely the word ‘books’.

4.4. Writing in the Japanese Syllabus
In English Communication I writing is limited to brief passages on information, ideas, etc. based upon what the students have read, heard, learned and experienced. As with reading, writing includes paying due attention to phrases that convey the main idea of a sentence and various linking phrases. In English Communication II it shifts to being able to write cohesive and coherent sentences as well as taking note of the structure of passages and the relation between the text, charts and tables (MEXT, 2003:2). English Communication III is a continuation course of I and II with no new content. The reading and writing skill sometimes share the same content in the Japanese syllabus, hence the similarities. Students taking the
English Expression course I and II are expected to be able to write both brief and elaborate passages respectively on a given topic in a style suitable for audience and purpose, and also be able to review and revise one’s own writing (ibid:4). Peer-reviewing does not seem to be a part of the reviewing aspect, although it says that they should compare each other’s statements in order to broaden their own minds, though that statement appears in separate paragraph. They are supposed to be able to clarify their arguments in writing, although it does not state what kind of content they should write about since it is probably up to the teacher to select content from the common content section. In English Conversation writing has no role as its main focus is on speaking and listening. Writing can be used as a medium when dealing with the common content such as describing, reporting, explaining, etc. but it is not explicitly stated.

4.5. Writing in the Swedish Syllabus
Writing is tied together with the oral aspect in and includes interaction of various kinds, also in more formal settings where the students “instruct, narrate, summarise, explain, comment, assess, give reasons for their opinions, discuss and argue” (Skolverket, 2013:4). In English 5 this also includes being able to not only process their own but others written communication in order to vary, clarify and verify. Moreover, they are expected to be able to create structure and adapt it for purpose and situation. This includes words that clarify casual connections and time aspects (ibid:4).

The writing becomes increasingly more complex in English 6 and includes more situations as well as the ability to comment on and take notes when listening and reading. By English 7 the students are expected to be able to argue (both through writing and speaking) different views and perspectives. They are also supposed to use written communication in a chosen specialization area, probably one pertaining to their program. In this course we also see the inclusion of modern technology, as the students are to lead and document written communication in various media. The examples they give are work processes and negotiation situations related to both social and working life (Skolverket, 2013:12). Finally they should be able to adapt their own and others’ writing, in formal and complex contexts and adapt it according to style, genre and purpose.

4.6. Comparison of Writing
The Swedish syllabus requires the students’ writing skills to be highly developed by the time they reach English 7, as it contains more complex areas and a wider range of topics for writing, including the aforementioned area of specialization. By comparison the Japanese
syllabus can appear to be a bit more lackluster in the writing-aspect. The Swedish content gets more and more complex and elaborate with each course whereas the Japanese are forced to adapt from the common content. This is not to say that the Japanese content necessarily stays the same, but one could argue that it might require the teacher to constantly increase the level of difficulty. The role of the teacher is an indicator if the syllabus is Type A or Type B, as the Type A tends to have the teacher command a center role as a ‘decision-maker’. The content is also seen as something of a gift that the teacher bestows upon his students, since he/she is the expert in the subject area (White, 1988:44). Due to the fact that the topics in the common content are the same for all courses it could be argued that the Japanese syllabus forces teachers to be inventive in how to use these and adapt them in their own classrooms. In the Swedish syllabus each course introduces at least some new topics that the teacher has to bring up when teaching, such as in English 6 where the teacher has to bring up literary periods, authors, current issues, living conditions, just to name a few things. However in this sense both syllabi are to be considered Type A since the content has already been pre-determined and not something that is negotiated between the teacher and the students.

The topics and functions of language in the common content match up exactly with what White regarded as the Type A notional-functional (or functional-notional) syllabus. The common content in the Japanese syllabus is divided into different topics and examples of functions of language, and some of the content is graded based on situations that are likely to occur in a student’s everyday life (MEXT, 2003:5). The functions of language are categorized under different headings depending on their situational function. To sum it up, the Japanese syllabus seems to fit right into White’s established framework of the functional-notional Type A syllabus.

The Swedish syllabus also contains functions of language as well as topics, but presents it in a slightly different way. There is no checklist of different grammatical items and language functions; instead the functions and topics are incorporated under the headings content, reception and production. Furthermore, there are no headings in the vein of ‘expressing opinions’ or ‘obtaining information’, like a laundry list of things that the student has to acquire. Rather, the structure of the syllabus is such that the different functions of language are to be utilized by the student when interacting in different ways (Skolverket, 2013:3). The syllabus is however still very much based on the notional-functional theory (White, 1988:75) albeit in a slightly different fashion than its Japanese counterpart.
4.7. Listening in the Japanese syllabus
Since listening is the second receptive skill it shares much of its content with reading. The first instance of listening is found under English Communication I and the content is very specified: “Understanding information, ideas, etc., and grasping the outline and the main points by listening to introductions to specified topics, dialogues, etc” (MEXT, 2003:1). The other aspect of listening is that extra consideration should be given to the characteristic sound of English with due attention to tempo, volume, intonation, speed and rhythm. English Communications II expands the content to include reports and discussions, as well as paying attention to plot development. Plot development is the way a story progresses in literature or other fiction, so if coupled with the listening-skill it would mean listening to a story. Finally in this course we have the guessing of unknown both spoken and written words which was also included in reading, so there is nothing new to say about this (ibid:2).

English Expressions I and II require the student to be able to summarize and present information, as well as be able to form one’s opinion by comparing it with opinions from other sources based on what one has heard or read, as well as identifying similarities and differences (MEXT, 2003:3). The second course also includes the following listening-content: “Asking questions and giving opinions after hearing a presentation” (ibid:4). English Communications III is a course designed to enhance the students’ capabilities to accurately understanding and conveying information, but it does not present any new content, it merely states that the language activities in English Communication II should be applied (ibid:3).

In the final course English Conversation the requirements for listening only increase a little bit, as the students are now required to be able to appropriately convey information in a way that is suitable for the situation and intended receiver. As with the previous courses, the different skills should be used in conjunction with one another in order to facilitate learning (MEXT, 2003:5). Standard contemporary English should be used, but at the same time consideration should be given to the fact that there are many varieties of English spoken throughout the world (ibid:6). What constitutes as standard contemporary English is never specified, which in itself is interesting: Is American English the standard, or is it British English? Are both equally valid? It mentions that there are many varieties of English, but are they not considered to be standard? Maybe it is up to the teacher’s discretion to decide what is to be considered standard contemporary English.

4.8. Listening in the Swedish syllabus
As with the Japanese syllabus many aspects of listening are the same as reading, but it still contains a fair share of listening-only activities such as the following in English 5 which
includes various dialect features: “Spoken language, also with different social and dialect features, and texts that instruct, relate, summarise, explain, discuss, report and argue, also via film and other media.”(Skolverket, 2013:3). Next we have coherent spoken language and conversions of different kinds, such as interviews, as well as utilizing different strategies for listening for various purposes.

Moving on to English 6 the listening-skill becomes more complex and includes not only debates and lectures but also drama and songs. Strategies for listening now include adapting a source-critical approach as well as searching for relevant information in longer sequences of spoken language and being able to understand perspectives and implied meaning. This also includes understanding how attitude and style is expressed in spoken language. Lastly, the final point in the reception-section includes how sound, language and picture are used in politics and advertisement in order to express ideas. Added to the production-skill content is the ability to comment take notes when listening and reading from different sources (Skolverket, 2013:7-8)

English 7 introduces a bit more content, such as listening to in-depth reports and being able to interpret values and purposes in spoken language. Another new feature is that students are to be able to understand how rhetorical devices are used and how language can be used to exercise power (Skolverket, 2013:12). The syllabus does not specify what kinds of rhetorical devices, so it is probably up to the teacher to decide.

4.9. Comparison of Listening
In English Communication I the students are only required to be able to grasp the main points of introductions of topics and dialogues whereas in English 5 there is a slew of topics that should be used. Not only that, the students are supposed to listen to English which is spoken with different social and dialect features, which could make for a more difficult listening-skill requirement. On the other hand, the Japanese syllabus stresses the importance of the characteristics of spoken English such as tempo, speed and intonation, and the Swedish syllabus contains no such content, save for the ambiguous phrase that referred to spoken language of various kinds (Skolverket, 2013:7).

Both syllabi also state that the content should be relevant to the student and that it should reflect their daily lives, but the Swedish syllabus also states debates, lectures and interviews as possible content, something that the Japanese equivalent does not. English Communication II and English 6 start to incorporate more literature but the Swedish course is the one that contains the most of it, as it also includes poetry, drama and song, and specifies
that it should be both old and contemporary literature. The Japanese merely states plot development, although much more content can be found in the common content section.

In the final course English 7 and the somewhat equivalent English Communication III there is a big discrepancy, as the latter is merely a development-course of English Communications II whereas English 7 appears to be more of a fully-fledged course. This makes comparing the two a bit trickier as it almost becomes the classic case of comparing “apples with oranges”\textsuperscript{4}. English 7 delves into more complex areas and builds upon some of the content established in English 6, such as being able to understand implied meaning, purposes, styles and values. In a sense one could say that English Communication III is similar in that regard; it builds upon previous knowledge and content. The course English Conversation is hard to compare with English 7, as it is designed to build upon the students’ ability to engage in everyday topics whereas English 7 is a course that includes theoretical and complex subject areas related to the student’s education, chosen specialization area, societal issues and working life (Skolverket, 2013:11).

### 4.10. Speaking in the Japanese syllabus
As with reading and listening, speaking shares content with writing. Students are expected to be able to speak English with due attention to sound, speed, intonation, pitch, etc. Speaking should also be used to effectively convey meaning to an audience using carefully thought-out explanations and descriptions. These are the only requirements for speaking in English Communication I and II, but there is a lot more pertaining to speaking in the English Expression courses. Almost the opposite of what was just mentioned, the students are expected to engage in impromptu speaking on a given topic, speaking in a concise manner in a style that is suitable for the audience and that fits purpose. In the second course this is expanded from a given topic to speaking in accordance to given conditions, and being able to express what one wants to say in a coherent and logical manner (MEXT, 2003:3-4).

The course that involves the most speaking is unsurprisingly English Conversation, as it seems to be designed to improve students’ speaking skills. This includes understanding what others are saying and responding accordingly to the situation, as well as asking questions oneself on matters of interest and responding to questions posed by others. One particularly interesting topic to note is “Holding conversations using basic expressions needed when living overseas” (MEXT, 2003:4). This is the only instance in the syllabus were English is mentioned as a tool for living in a foreign country. Another aspect of language that

\textsuperscript{4} An idiomatic expression which is used to express the act of comparing two totally different things.
is brought up is the use of non-verbal communication such as gestures in various situations, as well as the inclusion of using expressions in order to ask for repetition, paraphrasing, etc. More of these language functions to instigate action and expressing intentions can be found in the common content.

4.11. Speaking in the Swedish syllabus
As with the Japanese syllabus a lot of the content for speaking is shared with writing, such as the ability to narrate, explain, reason, discuss and argue. In English 5 the students should be able to utilize strategies for contributing and actively participate in discussions pertaining to their social life, as well as working life. Whereas the Japanese syllabus had a list of various language functions the Swedish syllabus states that students should process their own and others oral work in order to clarify and specify. The language functions could therefore be seen to be the same, although the way in which they are utilized is markedly different in the Swedish syllabus. Speaking does not change drastically in the English 6 course; there is a small addition of being able to comment when listening to different sources. In English 7 speaking is geared towards more complex subjects, such as negotiation and situations regarding one’s social and working life, utilizing language in a chosen specialized area as well as using modern technology (Skolverket, 2013:12).

4.12. Comparison of Speaking
The goal with speaking in both the Japanese and Swedish syllabus is geared towards communication, although the former have more precise goals. Nowhere in the Swedish syllabus do we find anything relating to correct pronunciation or rhythm when it comes to speaking English; in the Japanese syllabus it is incorporated into several different courses. This is probably due to the fact that the linguistic difference between Japanese and English is wider than that of Swedish and English, since both of those are Germanic languages. The structure, phonology and syntax of the Japanese language is totally different from that of English, which might necessitate the need for the syllabus to include language activities that deals with the characteristics of the language. An example of a major difference is that all syllables are pronounced with roughly the same stress, whereas in English stressed syllables tend to be pronounced louder and longer (Banno, et al, 2011:27).

Another interesting fact is that in the Japanese syllabus the word ‘audience’ appears several times, which could give the impression that English is to be mostly used when conducting communication with pre-determined listeners. Only in the course English Conversation do we
find a line which refers to living overseas. There was a push by the MEXT in 2003 with their so-called ‘Action plan’ to increase the students’ communicative abilities in English, hence the specific mentioning of greetings, response and topics regarding daily life (Willis and Rappleye, 2011:136). As a side-note it is worth mentioning that this ‘Action plan’ did not become the success that the MEXT was looking for, mostly due to lack of teaching hours (ibid). To get back on track, in the Swedish syllabus the word audience never appears, but they instead use the word ‘recipient’, and one could argue that the content that mentions that English should be used in more formal settings could pertain to presentations and non-impromptu conversations. Overall however, the functional aspect is much more defined in the Japanese syllabus, not in small part due the fact that it has a lot of already pre-selected content.

Speaking of content, the Swedish syllabus leans slightly towards the Type B-syllabus design in that the teacher’s role is not necessarily very authoritative. This is not to say that the teacher is supposed to bend to the whims of the students, but rather that the teacher is there to negotiate choice of content with the students. White uses a house-building analogy throughout the book and he relates the Type B syllabus as “[…] building a house a section at a time, with only a general idea of what the final dwelling will be like”, and that the only aspect that is agreed upon is the general outcome (White, 1988:95). This becomes evident in the first paragraph of the Swedish syllabus which states that students should relate to the content with their own experiences and their own knowledge (Skolverket, 2013:1).

The word ‘teacher’ never appears in the Swedish syllabus, only the word ‘teaching’: an implication that it is not about the teacher but the students. A word that also appears quite frequently is ‘opportunity’, in the context that students should be given the opportunity to develop an array of skills and to expand their knowledge. In many cases the general outline of the content is already decided upon, such as the fact that the teacher has to incorporate living conditions and social issues in his/her teaching. At the same time, it is stated in the curriculum for upper secondary school that students should be able to exercise influence over their education, and it also specifically states that teachers should plan together with their students and evaluate the education together (Skolverket, 2013:11). So in the Swedish syllabus the content is both pre-determined and negotiated with the students, which would mean that it is a hybridization of both the Type A and Type B syllabus that does not clearly fit into any of the two.

In the Japanese syllabus on the other hand it states that it is the teacher who should select suitable material in accordance with the students’ development, interests and concerns. Teachers should also devise various teaching-strategies such as pair work and group
work in order to facilitate teaching. The role of the teacher in their syllabus is quite authoritative, as the teacher is the one who selects and presents the content and the students are recipients. This also fits with the Type A notion that the teacher takes center stage in the learning-process (White, 1988:95).

4.13. Grammar

Both the Japanese and the Swedish syllabus are to be considered to be functional-notional at their core, but they do deviate slightly in certain aspects. The Japanese syllabus contains a part dedicated solely to grammatical items that are frequently used in sentence structures, which would mean that it incorporates some elements from the grammatical syllabus. The Swedish syllabus has no such section dedicated to grammar, and the usage of correct grammar is not even a grading criterion, although this is circumvented by phrasing the knowledge requirements so that it is implied that using grammatically correct English is a must in order to achieve a passing grade. For example, this is one of the requirements for attaining the grade E in English 5: “Pupils can understand the main content and basic details of English spoken at a varying speed and in clearly expressed written English in various genres” (Skolverket, 2013:4). It would be very difficult to have understanding without knowing any kind of grammar, so this is effectively the way that it is incorporated in the syllabus. Still, it is interesting to note that grammar, the foundation of language, is not mentioned explicitly, although the reason for this is likely the same as the one mentioned in the speaking-section: Swedish and English have many similarities which might render the need to focus on grammar unnecessary. Japanese on the other hand, which lacks many of the features of English like the indefinite article and the plural ‘-s’ at the end of a word (Banno, et al., 2011:43) might need this in order explain these foreign concepts.

The grammar section is included in the common content and it states that the role of grammar is to support communication and that the teaching of it should be linked with language activities. The grammar has to be taught in a way that is applicable to real-life situations (MEXT, 2003:7). Another interesting feature that might not be considered ‘straight grammar’ is the use of phonetic notation, which can be used to supplement the phonetic aspect of English. Additionally, the students are expected to be able to use dictionaries. Again, the Swedish syllabus does not include any reference to either phonetic writing or the usage of dictionaries. The Japanese syllabus also includes a section about vocabulary which states that for English Communication I about 400 new words should be added, and in the second course there should be 700 more, and in English Communication III there should be an additional
700 (ibid:6). There is no equivalent to this in the Swedish syllabus and the reason for this might be that Swedish students are not expected to have a quota on new words due to the fact that the English level is already quite high.

Under treatment of content the Japanese syllabus states that special consideration should be given to:

“Materials that are useful in deepening the understanding of the ways of life and cultures of Japan and foreign countries, raising interest in language and culture, and developing respectful attitudes toward these elements.” (MEXT, 2003:7)

Below that there is a paragraph that also mentions material that helps deepen international understanding in a broad perspective, heightening the student’s awareness of being a Japanese citizen in a global community and fostering a spirit of international cooperation (MEXT, 2003:7). Finally, there is a part that encourages material that is helpful in deepening individual thinking on society, humanity, nature, etc.

4.15. Realia in the Swedish syllabus
English 5 contains the following excerpt regarding realia:

“How living conditions, attitudes, values and traditions, as well as social, political and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world the use of English is spread and its position in the world.” (Skolverket, 2013:3)

In English 6 this paragraph is slightly modified and lacks the final sentence, and in English 7 they have added existential and ethical issues. English 7 also includes “cultural expressions in modern times and historically, such as literary periods.” (Skolverket, 2013:11).

4.16. Comparison of realia
The Japanese realia seems to be focused on raising both awareness of Japanese culture and cultures abroad, and how Japan is a part of the global, international world. There is also an element of showing respect to foreign cultures and fostering friendship with these. This probably has its roots in Japan’s moral education, which stresses the respect for other countries (Willis and Rappleye, 2011:85). The Swedish realia does not make any claims of
having students develop respect for cultural elements or cultivating any kind of Swedish identity that the Japanese appears to be doing, although it says in the Aims-section that teaching English should develop students’ curiosity in culture (Skolverket, 2013:1). It appears to be purely factual information rather than fostering respect for other cultures. Maybe this is due to the position English has in Swedish society, since a lot of TV-programs, music and advertisement are in English.

5. Discussion

As one can clearly see in the results the Japanese syllabus matches perfectly with White’s theory of the Type A content-based notional-functional syllabus (White, 1988:95). Its content is comprised of topics and language functions that the students are to master and the teacher’s role is that of authoritarian figure whose job is to select content from an already established list. There is not much in the way of student influence, and if there is it is not immediately noticeable or tangible. The Swedish syllabus would also fit within the Type A-tradition, although it draws influence from the Type B syllabus as well, since it encourages teacher-student decision-making (ibid). White (ibid:111) claims that mixing the two types was not that uncommon, although one would have to avoid some of the inherent clashes that could come from combining them, which the Swedish syllabus skillfully avoids by keeping its content pre-determined but allowing for student influence. Nunan (Nunan, 1988:37) argued that the grading and selection of content for a functional-notional syllabus can be difficult since there is no way to really grade language functions and topics in order of importance.

The Japanese syllabus has many topics that relate to situations that are likely to occur in the students’ daily and social lives, and they present various examples. The Swedish syllabus also states that the teacher should bring up areas related to the students’ education, societal and working life. The difference is that the Swedish syllabus does not give examples of what this would entail, but with the requirement for student influence it could be argued that this is to be negotiated between the teacher and the students. The selection of the content thus seems to be at least partially based on the lives of the students, so that which is learnt will be of benefit to them in their everyday life. This is one of the more readily visible similarities between the two.

Their focus seems to be different as well. The Japanese syllabus is more concerned with grammar, pronunciation and the mastery of topics and functions, as well as imbuing the students with a sense of being Japanese in a global world. This is tied in with the
inherent difference between Japanese and English, the English language’s status in Japan and the moral education which was briefly touched upon.

The Swedish syllabus appears to be operating on a higher level in terms of content and of what is expected from the students: it has a wider array of topics and includes literature from various historical eras, and the students are expected to actively use the language. The fact that the syllabus can appear as demanding is not all that surprising if one were to consider the results from the European Commission’s comparative study in which Sweden scored the highest amongst the non-native speaking countries when it came to English (Torstensson, 2012:13). Due to our already high level of English proficiency there is ample room to delve into these kinds of topics instead of focusing as much on grammar.

The way courses and content are structured is also noteworthy, as the Swedish syllabus has new content for every course whereas the Japanese has that as well as a common content core that is to be applied to all courses by the teacher. A lot in the Japanese syllabus seems to be about fostering a positive attitude towards communicating in English whereas the Swedish one focuses on making the students proficient in the language so that they desire to use it. However, these differences do not separate the two from the basic framework of what constitutes as a Type A syllabus as both have pre-selected content and goals, and assessment is based on achievement and mastery although the Swedish syllabus is slightly edging more towards the Type B syllabus (White, 1988:44).

Matejka and Kurke mentioned that a syllabus could act as a powerful document in that it is a contract and a communication device. Although the goal of the paper was not to look into this aspect, one could argue how the Japanese syllabus could be seen as a contract as one of its goals is to foster good relations between Japanese citizens and other countries. It is trying to communicate certain values such as respect for foreign cultures and what it means to be Japanese in an international world (MEXT, 2003:7). The Swedish syllabus does not have this type of ‘moral’ content, although it does state that the goal of the syllabus is to foster the students’ attitude towards communicating in English and deepening their understanding of other cultures (Skolverket, 2011:1).

To summarize, the Swedish syllabus could be seen as a Type A syllabus with some Type B elements mixed into it, such as student influence and the decreased role of the teacher. The Japanese syllabus is a very clear Type A syllabus where the content is pre-selected and the role of teacher is to act as the one who teaches this to the students. Given the totally different cultural spheres that these two syllabi have developed in, maybe it is not that surprising that they would be a bit different from one another.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to compare the Japanese syllabus of English with the Swedish syllabus of English by applying White’s (White, 1998:44) framework of two syllabi which he calls the Type A and the Type B. The Type A syllabus was concerned with the question of “What?” and what the content was to the teacher who then bestowed his knowledge of the subject to the students. The Type B dealt with “How?” and the content is what the subject is to the learner, while the teacher acts as a kind of coach. The results show that there are some major differences between the two syllabi, especially in the way of content and how they teach language functions. They share some similarities such as reporting and explaining what one has read or heard and they both have as a goal to foster a positive attitude towards English. Both are of the same type of syllabus, namely of the Type A, although the Swedish syllabus contains elements from the Type B syllabus. To that extent the research questions have been answered.

Several things could have been done in different ways and more things could have been investigated. Without access to the Japanese knowledge requirements (if they exist) it is difficult to make a holistic interpretation that includes all the different aspects of a syllabus. The difficulty of acquiring the Japanese documents is one of the bigger limitations of this paper. The categories for the data-collection could have been different as well. Another way of organizing the categories could have been to use the different sections of the syllabus rather than the skills, such as dividing it into Aim, Content, etc. The reason for not using this division of content is that the syllabi themselves are structured a bit differently from another and it could have proved tricky to find equivalents in each syllabus that would match up nicely together. It would also be interesting to look more deeply into moral education in Japan and how it affects the other subjects, and if the Swedish school has something that could be seen as an equivalent.

Future studies that can be made are how these two syllabi can be used in order to gain new insight on how to conduct teaching. Maybe one could analyze the benefits and drawbacks of each syllabus in order to facilitate and improve learning. After all, syllabi are constantly evolving and what is taken for granted today might be considered old by tomorrow.
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