Degree project

The English Language Syllabus in Sweden and Japan

- A comparative study

Erelinda Gashi

Author: Erelinda Gashi
Supervisor: Christopher Allen
Examiner: Chantal Albeart-Ottesen
Semester: Spring 2016
Subject: English
Level: Advanced
Course code: 4ENÄ2E
Abstract
This independent paper compares the Swedish and the Japanese national syllabi for English. Making use of White’s (1988) Type A and Type B syllabus distinction, a number of dimensions are put forward to permit a comparison between the syllabus documents for the two countries. The methods used are hermeneutics and word counting. By counting content signal word frequencies and observing the context in which the words were found, the relative linguistic and pedagogical focuses of the two syllabi are illuminated. The results of the word counting procedures indicate that both countries are somewhat similar when the results were combined from all the Type A dimensions. When observing the word counting for the Type B on the other hand, Sweden has more than 70 % of a word frequency, while Japan has a bit below 30 %. One consequence of this could be the proficiency in the English language that each country has, and the attitude towards learning the language. The results put forward, suggest the basis for an automatized quantitative comparison between the national syllabi which could be implemented in the form of a computer application.

Keywords: Educational system, English, Japan, Sweden, syllabus
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 GENERAL</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 AIM AND SCOPE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 GENERAL APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 LANGUAGE SPECIFIC APPROACHES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 TYPE A AND TYPE B</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Type A</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Type B</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 RECENT APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE PLANNING/SYLLABUS DESIGN</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Connection to the CEFR</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Communicative Language Teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 The Post Method Era</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 SWEDISH AND JAPANESE SCHOOL SYSTEMS – A COMPARISON</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 The Socratic and Confucian method</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 Swedish educational system</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3 English in Sweden</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1 Japanese educational system</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2 English in Japan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 MATERIAL</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 HERMENEUTICS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Existentially focused hermeneutics</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 The hermeneutics of suspicion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 General theory of interpretation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4 Naive and mature interpretation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 COUNTING WORDS AND DIMENSIONS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Table with content signals</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 TYPE A ...................................................................................................................... 30
4.2 TYPE B ...................................................................................................................... 35
4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE MATERIAL .............................................................................. 35

5 CONCLUSION .............................................................................................................. 41

6 REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 42
INTERNET ....................................................................................................................... 44
FIGURES ......................................................................................................................... 44

Appendix 1: Different approaches with content signals and sub words ......................... 46
1 Introduction

1.1 General
Countries have for many years had to make decisions on how to plan subjects in their school curricula. English is today a global language but does indeed vary in many ways. The planning of English as a school subject can be very different, depending on different countries’ educational cultures. It varies in some practical perspectives such as the way educational authorities and school bodies divide the English lessons hours, how long the lessons are, and in how the teaching develops (White, 1988).

The planning of language subjects also differs in linguistic perspectives with the content of the lessons; methodologies differ and the approach could for example be structural where the English lessons are built upon grammar and structures. Alternatively, the subject could be planned on a lexical basis, where the focus lies on lexical units and vocabulary for the students to broaden their word knowledge. These are just two of the approaches that can be used in the classroom. Lastly the planning of English as a school subject differs culturally and historically where each country has its own culture and history.

The roles of teacher and student are in contrast as well, mirroring societal and historical developments, going back many years. There is a trend where the focus has gone from the teacher to the learner, and from the teaching to the learning. This is a trend that has had great consequences for the teachers as well as for the students (Cook, 1983). The countries that were chosen for this essay, Sweden and Japan, are both two well developed countries when it comes to the technology and relationships with other countries. While Sweden ranked in first place in the *EF English Proficiency Index* in 2015, Japan ranked in 30th place. One of the justifications for the essay is to see how both syllabi are structured and if the reason for the results lies in the structure of the syllabi. It is important as a teacher to know of different approaches and methods and how they are depicted in the syllabi. The field of language teaching is a field of great measures, and should therefore be taken with great awareness.
1.2 Aim and Scope

The purpose of this essay is to observe what similarities and differences can be found in a comparison between the Swedish and the Japanese syllabi, using the Type A and Type B language syllabus distinction put forward by White (1988). On the basis of this distinction number of dimensions will be specified, enabling a comparison between the Swedish and the Japanese syllabi for English. This essay makes use of a quantitative methodology to count various different “content signal” words – that characterize that specific method – in the syllabus documents. Content signal word is a term brought up for this essay, and signifies the words that the different dimensions are semantically linked to. This procedure aims to position the Swedish and the Japanese syllabi on a number of dimensions based on the Type A and Type B distinctions described above. The different dimensions will have main content signals, and additionally a number of sub words which are related to the content signals semantically. For example, the structural dimension will have content signals such as form and grammar, which in their turn will have sub words such as design and syntax (See Appendix 1).

The essay will also discuss why the syllabus could be the way it is in the specific country based on philosophical and cultural traditions. Taking its point of departure in Japan being an east Asian country, and Sweden a Northern European country, this essay will also examine if the Japanese educational system with its respect for teacher authority favours a more teacher-centred, Type A syllabus over the Swedish syllabus which has been influenced by more progressive currents in education.

2 Theoretical background

Curriculum studies go way back in history, to the beginnings of the great medieval universities. In the 13th century academic studies meant subjects that would develop a student’s intellectual capacity. The student began with the trivium which was a method of critical thinking and the lower division of the seven liberal arts which included Latin grammar, rhetoric and logic. When one completed these studies of four years, the student would be awarded with a degree. When receiving this degree, one could follow up with the quadrivium which was the upper division in the liberal arts including arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. The study of the quadrivium and trivium was the basis of the curriculum of the medieval schools and the essence of the university education (Onions, 1991).
2.1 General approach to the school curriculum

In the USA, curriculum tends to be synonymous with syllabus in the British sense.
(White, 1988:4).

As the quote above describes, the words *syllabus* and *curriculum* might be confusing depending on conflicting British and American English usages of the terms. This essay will adopt the practice of British English. *Curriculum* will be used as the word for a plan that the school has for the education, and *syllabus* as the word for a plan that the school has for each subject. In Britain, the term *syllabus* is used when referring to the content of an individual subject, whereas *curriculum* is used when referring to the total content that is to be taught, and also aims to be understood within one school. The syllabus is therefore in a subordinate position to the curriculum. This differs from the American usage where curriculum has the same meaning as syllabus has in Britain (White ibid:4).

2.2 Language specific approaches

English language teaching (ELT) and Modern language teaching (MLT) have changed and evolved over the centuries. White (1988: 7-8) suggests that there is a dichotomy between MLT and ELT. In the 19th century, educational opportunities were opened up and modern languages came to inhabit a place in the school curriculum. They drew upon the model of Latin teaching, which was taught through the grammar-translation method, teaching about the form and the structure of the language. MLT became institutionalized being heavily influenced by the academic traditions of the major universities. Additionally, no consideration was given to research into language teaching nor into the training of language teachers.

The most important influence which led to the separation of the two traditions was the emergence of English as an international language. French was the language of a continental nation while English was the language of an island state. Thanks to the linguistic legacy of the British Empire, the arrival of the USA as an English speaking superpower, and the association of English with the industrial and technological developments, English has become the language of the world. At the same time, the status of the modern languages other than English has weakened together with the reasons for learning them. ELT entered upon a period rising in financial resources and professional innovation. Moreover, English is a compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum throughout the world, with developments in linguistics and language teaching. A change has been brought about from the fundamentally structuralist
approaches to language teaching, such as audiolingualism, to the recognition of the innate ability of L2 learners to discover the rules of language themselves. More recent developments recognize the place of communication and function subsumed under the heading of communicative language teaching (CLT). Different types of curricula, and different types of syllabi reflect different emphasis given to language, learning and teaching (ibid 1988:10-17). Two main approaches can be found to the syllabus, Type A and Type B, which will be presented in the next section.

2.3 Type A and Type B

Language learning is in constant progression and so is the evolution of syllabus design. White (1988:47) mentions two paradigms; propositional being established and prevailing, and process, recently developing. The established paradigm is characterized by formal and functional syllabi. It interprets language over a propositional plan and a formal, system-based knowledge and competences which are compulsory when learning a new language. The developing paradigm on the other hand, is characterized by how something is learnt which includes the knowing of, and learning how to communicate in the classroom. It is epitomized in task-based and process syllabi. Breen (1987 quoted in White 1988) and Long & Crookes (1993) make a distinction between two categories, synthetic and analytic syllabi, and furthermore differentiate Type A and Type B syllabi. The table below is created by White (1988) and highlights the differences between the Type A syllabus and the Type B syllabus types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type A – What is to be learnt?</th>
<th>Type B syllabus – How is it to be learnt?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventionist</td>
<td>Non-interventionist</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>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as decision maker</td>
<td>Learner and teacher as joint decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content = What the subject is to the expert</td>
<td>Content = What the subject is to the learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content = A gift to the learner from the teacher or knower</td>
<td>Content = What the learner brings and wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives defined in advance</td>
<td>Objectives described afterwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject emphasis</td>
<td>Process emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment by achievement or by mastery</td>
<td>Assessment in relationship to learners’ criteria of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing things to the learner</td>
<td>Doing things for or with the learner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1** Language syllabus design: Two types (White, 1988)
Ellis (1984) quoted in White, 1988:46) claims that the knowledge of the subject has an important role in the content syllabus. He suggests that a Type A syllabus contributes directly to analytic knowledge which is knowing about the language with its different parts, rules and organization. This does not occur during spontaneous communication where the time or opportunity to prepare what will be said is non-existent. He additionally compares the Type A syllabus with the Type B where the latter contributes to what Ellis has called “primary processes”. These processes automatize existing non-analytic knowledge which is available during unplanned and spontaneous communication. The table below describes the different approaches, what they focus on together with examples from course books which identify with the same approach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type A approach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Grammar, structures e.g. Tenses present simple, present-progressive</td>
<td>New Headway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>Different topics that are talked or written about, and how to talk about them. Meaning and not form e.g. Shopping, holiday</td>
<td>Reading between the Lines: Integrated Language and Literature Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Survival situations outside of classroom and tools needed there, e.g. at the bank, hospital. Service between people</td>
<td>Airport phrase books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional-functional</td>
<td>Complaints, warnings, apologies, introductions, categories of communicative language requirements inside and outside of classroom e.g. grammar, dialogue in the restaurant, justifying opinions.</td>
<td>Penguin Functional English: Pair Work One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Equal weight to reading, listening, speaking and writing. Divided as in the CEFR into receptive skills, productive/interactive skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>Most common words in language, using corpus e.g. word formations, vocabulary related to topics. Objective, for students to widen vocabulary, make useful in situations in real life. E.g. Define the words the.</td>
<td>Collins Cobuild English Course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type B approach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process/Procedural</td>
<td>Educational rather than linguistic. Impossible to know what route the syllabus will follow, outcome negotiated by learners. Different roles of teacher and learner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2** Type and Type B approach with focus and example of text books

### 2.3.1 Type A
These syllabi have different areas of focus, but essentially they have the same basis. The type A syllabi have an interventionist approach on behalf of the teacher, which prioritizes the pre-specification of content or skills objectives and linguistic requirements. An authority such as
the teacher will therefore pre-select, specify and present all of the content which is to be learnt whether the items are grammatical structures, topics, themes, categories of communication function or communicative and cognitive skills. In both these approaches, there is a clear significance of different value systems. Syllabi with a Type A approach may appear to have very little in common because of differences in content. Structural and functional syllabi have content as their basis, which additionally depends on the priorities of the syllabus designer.

**Content syllabi** are the syllabi on which the most widely used language coursebooks, and the most popular new materials are based on. In a syllabus with a structural approach, the importance lies in the structures and their selection and organization. It is determined by the order already established by the functional sequence. Each step of the syllabus corresponds to a grammatical item as in the EFL course books *New Headway* (Soars and Soars, 2000) depicted below.

![Figure 3 Structural test, New Headway p. 8](image)

The *topical syllabus* is based on different topics and how to talk about them as exemplified in the coursebook series *Reading between the Lines* (McCrae and Boardman, 1984). This approach is defined by meaning and not form, which makes it difficult to work with. For example, working with a topic such as *shopping* can be interpreted widely which could include almost anything under that topic. One could therefore organize modules and sub-topics; such as the *mall* and the *grocery store* (White, 1988).
The situational approach concentrates on the requirements of the students outside of the classroom and the tools needed for these contexts. Individuals are different which makes this approach unreliable. Examples are the airport phrase books such as the Berlitz language guides which have the most useful words and phrases for travellers combined with a guide on how to pronounce individual words. They are also arranged so that the learner can find the necessary words easily and quickly translated both ways. One necessity could be the language phrases and vocabulary required to obtain a bus ticket.

![Figure 4 English/Japanese phrase book, an example of a situational textbook that can be bought in the airports](image)

The notional-functional syllabus is defined in terms of the categories of communicative language use based on different situations as well, but is not as restricted as the situational approach. Function is defined in terms of communicative acts where the language is used to achieve a purpose. This approach focuses on the requirements both in the classroom and outside of the classroom including grammar as well as participating in a dialogue in the restaurant and justifying opinions. One example of a notional-functional textbook is the Penguin Functional English: Pair Work One by Peter Watcyn-Jones (White, 1988).

A skills syllabus lists those skills which are characteristic of the proficient language user such as reading, listening, speaking and writing. They are given equal weighting which is problematic as all skills are not appropriate to all learners. This syllabus type has not been given as much attention as the other syllabi, but there is a growth of interest in those skills. Current research on reading and writing is progressing rapidly and there is a redirection from product-
focus to process-focus in teaching reading and writing. Instead of reading a text as a product to be read or written, the focus is on how the reader and writer interprets the text (White, 1988).

A *lexical syllabus* is based on lexical units and vocabulary related to topics. A corpus is used to identify the most common words in the language. One example of a course book is the *Collins Cobuild English Course* (Willis and Willis, 1988) where the main objective is for the students to widen their vocabulary and make it useful in situations that may appear in real life.

![Figure 6 Lexical textbook in Collins Cobuild English Course, p. 48](image)

2.3.2 Type B

Syllabi embodying a Type B approach are contrastively different where content is subordinate to the learning process and pedagogical procedure. The basis of this syllabus is psychological and pedagogically learner-centred or learning-centred, rather than linguistic. The concern lies with *how* language is learnt rather than *what* is learnt, as in the Type A syllabus approach. The selection of language content will be roughly adjusted and there is also no attempt for the teacher to intervene in the language learning process through the selection, ordering and presentation of content. Some learners are more efficient language learners than others and different people have different ways of learning. The type B syllabi have a non-interventionist approach focusing on experience. The emphasis is on a language growth that is natural and aims to deepen the learners’ communication in real life without any preselected or arranged items (White ibid:45).
The process approach to a syllabus is educational rather than linguistic. It is like building a house, a section at a time with only a general idea of what the final house will look like. It is impossible to know what route the syllabus will follow, but the outcome is negotiated by the learners. The teacher is not powerless but the view of the roles of teacher and learner is different (ibid 1988:45).

2.4 Recent approaches to language planning/syllabus design

The different approaches described above, have indeed influenced the CEFR, which in turn, have influenced the Swedish syllabus for English. In this section the connections to the CEFR will be discussed as well as the Socratic and Confucian philosophical traditions from which the Swedish and the Japanese syllabus originate.

2.4.1 Connection to the CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a tool developed by the Council of Europe (CoE). The CoE explain the CEFR as a means of providing a common basis across Europe, for the harmonization of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines and textbooks etc. The different stages in the framework are identical regardless of the language, and can be used to compare the language competence in an international context. Sweden adopted a new syllabus for English in 2011 which is more closely linked to the CEFR than before. One justification for the new syllabus was so that the new goals and grading criteria would make the standards of grading more equivalent between schools (Mader and Zeynep, 2010).

A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 are the levels of language proficiency from beginner to advanced learner. The different levels work as a basis in the English syllabi as well. However, they are created from the requirements in the Swedish education system using intermediate levels between the CEFR levels, such as A1.1 and A1.2, to correspond to the previous stages in the Swedish syllabus for languages. By connecting the levels in English to the levels in the CEFR, it is possible for a student who wishes to study abroad or work in another European country, to compare one specific course grade to one level in the CEFR (Skolverket, 2011).

In the commentary supplements accompanying the subject syllabi, the linkage to the CEFR is specified by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Both the English syllabi and the
CEFR are criterion-referenced and have positive descriptors presented as a series of scales with “Can Do statements” from levels A1 to C2. They focus on what the student can do with the language in contrast to previous syllabi, where the focus was on what the student can not do. The communicative approach is seen where the CEFR has the main goals that we can communicate and assess knowledge and this approach can also be understood in the English syllabi (ibid: 2011). Figure 7 below shows the different levels of language proficiency in the CEFR, beginning with the basic user, ending with the proficient user.

Figure 7 Levels of language proficiency, the CEFR

Figure 8 below depicts the different levels in the English syllabus, where Skolverket has specified the CEFR levels in relation to the different year groups, grade 7, 8 and 9. The Swedish syllabus for English uses the intermediate levels between the CEFR levels (Skolverket, 2011).

Figure 8 Levels of language proficiency in Sweden, in relation to the years
2.4.2 Communicative Language Teaching
Communicative language teaching (CLT) is included in the CEFR, the Swedish and the Japanese syllabus for English. CLT focuses on the communicative functions rather than on linguistic forms such as grammar. In the 1960s, there was a prevailing opinion that one had to learn to master the structure of a language before starting to use it. Today, CLT has become a term that embraces a number of different views and methods. The students need to have the desire to communicate, in order for an activity in the classroom to be communicative while the teacher should not disrupt the communication or correct language errors (Lundahl, 2009:116).

2.4.3 The Post Method Era
Prabhu (1990) claims that individual teachers prefer an approach that goes in hand with what they like and believe to be the right approach. There have been explorations in language teaching pedagogy with a shift from the traditional concept of method toward a post method era. Teachers are now empowered to invent a systematic alternative to method in their language teaching. There is a great potential with the internet and technological innovations, which are likely to capture the imagination of the teaching profession in the future as it has in the past. It will most likely influence both the content and the form of instructional delivery in the language teaching. There is an advantage to the post method era because it encourages teachers to learn and understand different methods and approaches, and eventually build up their own method based on students and contexts. Consequently, the needs and interests of the students will be met. The disadvantage of this development is that not all methods and approaches can be applied in any given educational culture. They are not culturally universal, and therefore, when applying them, the social, cultural and political context has to be taken into account (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

2.5 Swedish and Japanese school systems – a comparison
Sweden is situated in Northern Europe with a population of about 9 million. The official language is Swedish, but English is the leading foreign language. The country has a high standard of living with a highly developed economy. The social welfare system is paid with taxes and the wealth distribution in Sweden is one of the world’s most equal ones in terms of income (World Economic Forum: 2013).
In contrast, Japan is an island country in East Asia with a population of 126 million. The country is in third place in the world, when it comes to having the largest economy with a high standard of living and a level of development. One would think that with the progress that both Sweden and Japan have made with technology, they would be broadly in agreement when it comes to their educational system (World Economic Forum: 2013).

2.5.1 The Socratic and Confucian method
When the syllabus of a European country syllabus is being compared that of an Asian country, one needs to understand the different philosophical and religious traditions behind these documents. At a simplistic level this contrast can be seen in terms of Socratic and Confucian philosophical traditions, the first based on the ancient Greek and the latter based on Confucianism as a religion from China.

The Socratic method is one of the oldest and most powerful of methods. Socrates tried to engage other people in conversations about justice and courage, and believed that the knowledge could be extracted through Socratic dialogue. The method is concerned with developing critical thinking and exploring the subject in depth. The teacher asks questions which will encourage the students to develop. It is also about students asking questions and always having a desire to know why things are being done (Arwedson, 1998:52). The Socratic method is very abstract and can often be recognized in Swedish schools, combined with CLT, in comparison to the Confucian method and the Japanese textbooks that teaches the students about loyalty and obedience (Platt, 2005). Additionally, course books and other educational materials in Japan are factual and not essentially made for discussion leaving very few opportunities for the students to engage in critical thinking. There has been a misleading awareness that Japan’s most nationalistic textbooks twist the reality and are widely used. According to Sneider (Parker, 2014) those books are used in less than one percent of the Japanese classrooms.

2.5.2 Swedish educational system
In 1800, the introduction of the folk school resulted in changes in the Swedish class system where the middle class had more influence and the lower class became more disciplined and socially controlled (Selander, 2003:58-62).

Our world is globalized where humans have to think and adapt. The life-long learning is about the learning continuing after school and in everyday life. The purpose is to give the citizens
tools for social integration and participation in the knowledge-based society (Skolverket, 1999:31). Life-long learning has been established as an international requirement on the citizens and their governments (Selander, 2003:67). Every student has their sociocultural landscape which the teacher has to comprehend in order to understand the student who is formed and developed in conjunction. The hidden curriculum is the process of that development. It is a process where the culture and the norms are the elements that guide teachers in how to foster the students (Hundeide, 2006). As the quote below states, the national school system in Sweden is based on democratic foundations:

The national school system is based on democratic foundations. The Education Act stipulates that education in the school system aims at students acquiring and developing knowledge and values. It should promote the development and learning of students, and a lifelong desire to learn.

(Skolverket, LGY11:4).

In the table below, the different stages of the Swedish educational system are lined up with the age in which the children undergo that specific level. Stages one to three are compulsory while the two last stages are optional (Skolverket, 2011a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>For children who have not yet started school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school class</td>
<td>Age 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory school</td>
<td>From age 7 to age 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>From age 16 to age 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University studies, Folk High Schools or Higher Vocational Education</td>
<td>From age 18 or 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 9 Stages and years in the Swedish educational system**

**2.5.3 English in Sweden**

During the 19th century, Sweden became more industrialised and a large number of people decided to emigrate to America. They came in contact with the English language and English has since, grown as an important foreign language. English has a strong influence in regards to art, culture and media with Sweden rarely dubbing English programs, instead using Swedish subtitles. There is also a debate on whether English should be considered a second language or a foreign language. Sweden is one of the countries where English is most widely spoken in addition to the mother tongue. Almost everyone in Sweden acknowledges the benefits of knowing languages other than their mother tongue.
Teaching should also help students develop language awareness and knowledge of how a language is learned through and outside teaching contexts.

(Skolverket, LGY11:1).

The Swedish syllabus for English points out the importance in not only learning English in school, but outside of the teaching context as well. English is a compulsory subject from the fourth grade but many pre-schools start with English at the age of 3 using singing and counting activities (Skolverket, 2011a). Swedish people are regularly exposed to English in school as well at home via TV, media etc. They use the internet to practice their English proficiency and to speak and communicate. The learning is about theory and practice and not only theory, as in many other countries. The important thing here is that the Swedish syllabus is aware of the importance of English as a language in the surroundings as well as in school. Sweden understands the surrounding world as a resource for contacts and learning and the teaching should help the students to develop an understanding of how to search for, select and evaluate content from multiple sources of knowledge, experiences and information (Skolverkt, LGY11).

2.6.1 Japanese educational system
The Meji revolution in 1868 made Japan adapt the methods and structures of Western learning. The education system became state-centred with a moralistic curriculum. It endorsed Confucian ideals which meant loyalty to the state, obedience and devotion to the family. Later, a curriculum with an emphasis on the importance of nationalism came along (Platt, 2005). An education reform was set after the American occupation in World War II, which meant that Japan would be democratic with no textbooks or educational materials promoting nationalism or military teachings. The new reforms had the aim to ease the burden of entrance examinations, support lifelong learning and promote internationalization and technology (Jones, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>From age 6 to age 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>From age 12 to age 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>From age 15 to age 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college/University</td>
<td>From age 18 (2 years/4 years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10** Stages and years in the Japanese educational system
The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) sets the curriculum guidelines while the School Education Act requires the schools around the country to use the textbooks that follow the guideline. Furthermore, the curriculum guideline is not meant to establish a fixed, uniform line for the teachers to observe. Instead it has the purpose to help teachers to adapt the curriculum in a creative way to the new demands of children and society in general. It is compulsory until the age of 15, but 90 % complete high school and another 40 % graduate from college or university. Japan also has a shadow education system unofficially called “cram schools” attended by over 75 % of elementary school students. This education system with the same curriculum as the ordinary schools is specialized in educating the students to pass the entrance examination tests which will be explained later (MEXT, 2008).

2.6.2 English in Japan

The first contact that Japan had with the English language was in the 16th century. English did nevertheless spread within the country since Japanese was never challenged by the language of a colonizing power. For more than 200 years, Japan closed itself to the world with a fear of European colonial ambitions. In the Meji period, people started learning English since it became apparent that English was needed for contact with the west (Gottlieb 2005: 36). Japanese people see English as a necessity to communicate with the rest of the world, but the majority come around well in their daily lives and jobs without any required knowledge or use of English. Japanese is seen as a symbol of economic power. Nevertheless, the major corporations in Japan require their employers to take certification tests in English, Test of English for international Communication (TOEIC). It measures the everyday English skills of people working in an international environment. Thus, this knowledge is not used since Japanese is the language of the workplace and business (ibid: 2005).

Today, English is a minority language with few domains in which English is used as an alternative to Japanese. There is an increasing use of English within the fields of science although the users are few (Honna 1995:57). The Japanese government does make effort for greater internationalization of Japanese society but English is not widely used. The ideology that existed 50 years ago, that Japan and Japanese have a cultural and linguistic uniqueness to them which do not encourage the teaching and use of English, could be the explanation. Some Japanese academics believe that Japan should defend their own language and limit English to a few people who need the language for international interaction (Gottlieb 2005:68).
The English subject was introduced in 1947, but it took until 2002 for it to become a required subject at junior high and high schools. Students who complete an education of nine years compulsory school will have studied English for three years at the age of 15. In the entrance examinations and in high schools, English is emphasised, since many university degrees have a foreign language requirement. Although it has become more important, many Japanese lack of oral proficiency skills. A majority of the time spent for English in class is put on preparations for the paper-based entrance examinations for universities. The examinations emphasize reading comprehension, adopting the grammar translation approach, translating English words into Japanese. Japan is a country where the university one attends largely determines for the career prospects. There is not much space left for the communicative approach since English is seen as a means to being accepted to the best university possible. Course planning, teaching methods and resources for teaching English today are highly shaped by this fact, and a lack of teachers’ skills is also considered as one factor (O’Donnell 2003:34).

In the 1980s Japan adopted the communicative approach through the launch of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme. English speakers are invited to Japan to work as assistant English teachers in schools and improve the international understanding. The entrance examination does from 2006 onwards includes a listening component and the ability of Japanese people to learn other languages is growing. This is because of changes in teaching methodology, English internet-related activities and people studying abroad. Although it looks as if Japan is trying and making improvements, the quality of English education has been a topic very much talked about. According to MEXT, the English level has to increase, or else Japan can not participate in the worldwide arena (Gottlieb 2005: 37).
3 Methodology

In order to carry out this comparative study, two research methods have been used. The two methods are hermeneutics and the quantitative analysis of word frequencies. The latter approach is influenced indirectly by Biber’s (1988) work which used word and linguistic feature counts to establish dimensions of variation between speech and writing. In this chapter, the central interpretative methodology of hermeneutics and validity and reliability will be explained and implemented together with Biber’s (1988) method, as the basis for the methodology in this essay. The essay is deductive since principles from White’s theory relating to Type A and Type B syllabi will be used as the basis for the comparison, and later applied to data.

3.1 Material
The data used as basis in this essay involved:

- Curriculum for the upper secondary school and syllabus for English, Sweden (Skolverket, 2011). Läroplan för gymnasieskolan.
- Curriculum for the upper secondary school, and syllabus for English, Japan (MEXT, 2008)

The Swedish syllabus for English has several sections which are divided into 14 pages. The first section contains of the introduction, the aim of the subject and lastly what positive outcomes teaching English will have on the students. The next sections in the syllabus are the individual year-long courses English 5, English 6 and English 7 with their central content followed by the requirements for the different grades, from A to F.

The Japanese syllabus is different and divided into two documents where one states the subject aim and content, as in the Swedish syllabus, but does not cover any knowledge requirements to assist in grading. This part is nine pages long and has more subsections, starting with Overall Objectives, continuing with the Oral Communication I, II and then English I, II. In a later section the Japanese syllabus presents the different skills areas: Reading, writing, speaking and listening. The last section contains of Foreign Languages Other Than English with Curriculum
Design and Treatment of the Contents. It differs from the Swedish syllabus for English where the Japanese syllabus is the syllabus for foreign languages and not specific only for English, although eight pages cover English as a subject. While the Swedish syllabus devotes all its content to each specific English course, the Japanese syllabus has a common central theme with topics, fixed expressions, and grammar sections that can be used to achieve the course objectives (MEXT, 2008).

3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is most appropriately used when the purpose of the study is to access the informants’ experiences and let them decide what they want to write or talk about. However, this essay is not about interpreting the experiences of informants but is instead about interpreting a syllabus document as a plan of what should be taught in school. The two syllabi have been drafted by a working party of experts, rather than representing the work of one individual (Ödman, 1994 cited in Fejes & Thornberg, 2015:71).

When interpreting a text, it is important to put our own prejudices aside; otherwise the difficulty could lie in finding the message of the text. A structural analysis and a frequency table could give a few clues of the journey of interpretation where the goal is yet to be determined. One form of frequency table is used in this study where word frequencies are depicted and analysed. The quantitative strains are one piece of the puzzle contributing to the whole picture coming forward. All of the pieces that have been gathered have to connect on some logical level and strengthen each other, for the overall picture to be credible (ibid 2015:71).

Palmer (1969) in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:72) argues that while the first step is to interpret freely, the next is to use literature and research concerning the main themes of the texts. The literature and the results of research contain knowledge that will not only be extended in terms of depth, but also challenge the process of interpretation. The hermeneutic spiral is built upon the connection between prior research and the empirical material that the researcher is going to interpret. There is a bridge between the both of them and with every bridge, the spiral digs itself deeper and gives more depth into the interpretation (ibid 2015:72). The process of analysis and interpretations is described below as a series of different steps:
- The empirical material
- The literature read
- The table of categories constructed
- The results of the interpretation process
- Frequencies of words reoccurring

(Fejes & Thornberg (2015:87))

3.2.1 Existentially focused hermeneutics
Ricoeur (1988) discusses in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:71) the first one, existentially focused hermeneutic which is psychologically focused. The interpreting lies in trying to understand the author behind the texts better than she or he does her or himself. The task of the researcher is to try to understand another person’s dreams, projects and intentions by using empathy and expression. The prejudice one have of an experience for example, play a great role in the interpreting. Sköldberg & Alvesson (1994) in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:73) also claim that prejudice can additionally mean that the researcher designate heroes and villains in the research material while interpreting and it is therefore important to write a comment of the prejudice one has about the phenomena being studied. While existentially focused hermeneutics is not relevant for this research, other approaches to hermeneutics are important. This approach is psychological and is about interpreting people’s dreams and intentions, and that is not precisely the case in this essay. The focus here is instead on syllabi documents where one has to place words and parts of the text in a connection to the whole context.

3.2.2 The hermeneutics of suspicion
The hermeneutics of suspicion as referred to by Ricoeur (1988) in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:73) is an approach that can be used combined with explanations in the process of interpreting. A text contains words, clauses and signs and these can be registered in a structural analysis which will be part of the interpreting. The importance may lie in the consistency in how the words are used and the researcher will have to use a quantitative method and count how many times a specific word is used to prove a particular interpretation.

This essay is using dimensions and counting the words and trying to prove and decide whether the Swedish and the Japanese syllabus are more of a Type A or a Type B syllabus. A somewhat similar approach can be seen in Biber’s (1988) research where he uses word frequency to position spoken and written text along a number of dimensions defined by linguistic feature
counts. This point will be expanded upon below since dimensions and word frequencies is the basis on which this research is built upon.

3.2.3 General theory of interpretation
The third and mostly widespread hermeneutic approach is where the process of interpreting is seen as a general theory of interpretation. It does not matter what empirical material has been gathered but it is usually different texts such as diaries, essays, letters interviews etc. Many researchers make interpretations by placing parts of the text in connection to the whole. A priest has for instance the role of a messenger when preaching about how to understand the Bible and how people should live. This approach is also used when one wants to understand tales containing metaphors and allegorical aspects. As opposed to the hermeneutics of suspicion specialism, the general theory of interpretation focuses on the understanding of a message and not the explanation of the message (Fejes & Thornberg 2015:74)

3.2.4 Naïve and mature interpretation
As cited in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:76) by Westlund (2003) a text never exists in isolation; it has always been produced in an environment during a time period, a situation and a context. The researcher has to search for the intention of the text because it refers to a world and a context that has to be described and added as one part, when interpreted as a whole. The empirical material has to be compared to other texts or parts which express a similar thing, to be able to state if the interpretation is naïve or mature. A naïve interpretation would be to only read something fast and make an interpretation without further analysing it or placing it into its actual context.

In this essay for example, the word *contemporary* is found multiple times in the Japanese syllabus, but has nothing to do with the content signal that is used for counting the words. *Contemporary* in the content signals has to do with contemporary music, whereas in the Japanese syllabus, it has to do with contemporary English.

The quantitative data such as number of words and clauses is something that can be analysed to extend the depth of the interpretation. The text requests questions to the reader and this is important because other methods often do the opposite, where the researcher expresses the questions beforehand. This way furthermore leads to discovering the original intentions and purpose that played a part when the text was written (ibid 2015:76).
3.3 Counting words and dimensions

The analysis of the documents will focus on the use of words as “content signals” to provide a quantitative basis for placing of the syllabi on a number of dimensions described below. It will look at the different words compared to the country and their educational system and historical background. There is a background as to why the syllabus is the way it is since the syllabus mirrors the society and the people living in it, whereas a relationship might exist. Biber (1988:13) discusses the way researchers relate texts along situational or functional parameters such as formal/informal, interactive/non-interactive, literary/colloquial and restricted/elaborated. These parameters can be studied as dimensions since they define ranges of variation when applied to the spoken/written distinction.

This essay sets out a number of dimensions based on content signal words that are semantically or ontologically linked with a certain type of syllabus, Type A or Type B and their associated sub-categories. The dimensions will then be contrasted with each other defining the balance between Type A and Type B in the Swedish and the Japanese syllabus. This will be discussed from a situational or functional point of view by the counting of words. Frequency counts give an exact, quantitative characterization of a text which makes it possible to compare the different syllabi. The choice of not only having the content signals, but also words in addition, has been made because the content signal might not be found in the syllabi, but the words with the same meaning might. Sweden might use the word formation, whereas Japan could use the word structure. In this way, a national syllabus document’s use of words does not play too great a role when counting the words.

The numbers in the dimension have been drawn based on the normalization of the counts, by turning them into a standard scale of 100. They have been counted where the content signal words found in the English syllabus in Sweden and the English syllabus in Japan have been counted and then summed up together.

The dimensions that are depicted show a scale going from +ve (positive) to –ve (negative). If the count in the Swedish syllabus sum up to 40 on the scale, then Sweden is put towards the -ve, since the Japanese document then has a sum of 60 on a ratio of 100, and is put on the + side of the scale.
A linguistic dimension is determined on the basis of a consistent co-occurrence pattern among features, and frequency counts can therefore not identify linguistic dimensions. A syllabus that has words which co-occur defines a dimension of comparison. Quantitative techniques are used to identify the groups of features that co-occur in the syllabi, and these groupings are later interpreted in functional terms. This approach is based on the assumption that features do not randomly co-occur in texts; thus strong co-occurrence patterns of linguistic features mark underlying functional dimensions. Biber (1988:14) furthermore uses the different dimensions and counts the words in a frequency per 100 words. This essay will have a word counting procedure with the two syllabi and look at the frequency and the amount of specific words used in each syllabus. Moreover, Biber (1988:14) uses computer programs to count the frequency of certain linguistic features in a wide range of texts, but this essay will use the two syllabi documents and the words are counted both manually and with a computer programme.

Within the framework of study into the sociological substructures of linguistic variation, researchers have investigated textual variation through macroscopic and microscopic analyses. Microscopic analysis attempts to define the overall dimensions of variation in a language for example studying the functions of actually and really in conversational texts. The macroscopic perspective provides a detailed description of the communicative functions of particular linguistic features, for example comparing spoken and written texts in English. These features are based on the notions of textual dimensions and textual relation using quantitative statistical techniques (ibid 1988:25).

Microscopic as well as macroscopic approaches have complementary strengths and weaknesses. Microscopic text analysis locates the communicative functions of individual linguistic features while macroscopic text analysis, is complemented by this procedure in two ways. Initially, it identifies the potentially important linguistic features and genre distinctions to be included in a macro-analysis, and it then provides detailed functional analyses of individual linguistic features, which enable interpretation of the textual dimension. This furthermore provides a basis for discussion of the resemblances and differences among specific texts and genres. The restriction in macro-analyses is that it overlooks minor parameters of textual variation and is useless without the correlations established in micro-analyses making these two approaches mutually dependent (White 1988:25).
### 3.3.1 Table with content signals

While a quantitative analysis has been made, content signals with sub words have been used together with the dimensions. Below is a table of examples of words that were used, both with the Type A and the Type B approach. A document with all the content signals and the sub words is included in *Appendix 1*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Content signals</th>
<th>Subwords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type A approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Grammar, structure, word classes, clause elements</td>
<td>Syntax, noun, verb, subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical</td>
<td>News, science, human interest, culture</td>
<td>Scientific, relation, world, television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Bank, restaurant, airport, host family</td>
<td>Fund, check, tips, tab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional-functional</td>
<td>Complaint, apology, introducing, function</td>
<td>Annoyance, excuse, acquaint, encouraging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Listening, reading, writing, speaking</td>
<td>Skim reading, interpret, translate, intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>Idioms, corpus, phrasal verb, collocations</td>
<td>Idioms, corpus, phrasal verb, collocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type B approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process/Procedural</td>
<td>Learning process, problem based, project based, communicative task</td>
<td>Communicative, debate, speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 11** Table with dimensions and content signals

### 3.4 Problems and limitations

Since this essay uses both a quantitative and a qualitative method there are certain weaknesses to mixing methods. Although it is an enriching approach, in most cases, the researchers lack the methodological skills to handle both methods equally (Dörnyei 2007:45). *Validity* is a highly debated topic referred to as “trustworthiness”, “authenticity”, “credibility”, in not being able to reach a consensus. Dörnyei (2007:34) mentions *internal validity* which addresses whether the outcome is indeed a function of the various variables and *external validity*, which concerns the generalizability of the results outside the observed example. On the other hand, *reliability* is fairly straightforward in comparison, coming from measurement theory referring to the consistencies of data.
There are various strengths with a quantitative research. A research project that is systematic and focused on involving measurements that are precise could be one of the strengths. If the data is reliable and replicable as well as generalizable to other contexts, then the research has a high external validity. A research should offer indicators and help the readers to decide on the validity of quantitative findings. Additionally, evidence that is obtained through multiple methods, can increase the generalizability of the results, meaning the external validity (ibid 2007:34).

The reliability is increased when the results of a research are repeatable. This means that other researchers will generate the same results by doing the same experiments under the same conditions. The findings will be reinforced and the wider community will accept the hypothesis. By having a reliable research, the validity can be determined and the results strengthened. The entire experimental concept is included by the validity which establishes whether the results found, meet the requests of the scientific research method. If a reader would use the same method, the dimensions with Sweden and Japan, might look the same, and if that is the case, the validity would be increased. In this way, one can see if the Swedish and Japanese national syllabi for English use more words from the Type A or Type B syllabus (Dörnyei 2007:50).

To increase the reliability and the validity, the dimensions that the syllabi are put on are based on content signals. Consequently, if someone else were to count the same words, they would put the different syllabi on the same place on the scale of a standardization of 100. One aspect that might be a limitation and reduce the validity is the interpreting part of the hermeneutic approach. One person might see the word discussion in the Swedish syllabus, and count it as a micro skill of speak in the skills approach-dimension, whereas another person might instead look at the context and decide that it does not have anything to do with the skills dimension. This could have a connection to the initial understanding that each person has and therefore make the counting of the words different.

Additionally, since the Japanese syllabus was a scanned document, all of the counting had to be manual, meaning that there is a chance that words which exist in the document are not found. This not because of carelessness, but because of simply missing it unintentionally. Thus, the counting of the words manually, is something that might reduce the reliability in the Japanese
document. With the Swedish syllabus, the document was a pdf and the computer was able to count the words just by typing in the words which ought to be the object of a search.

3.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages
There is no generally used model to work with when working with the process of analysing and interpreting within hermeneutics, because every researcher has a different preunderstanding that is brought into the process of interpreting. The hermeneutic process is like a spiral which is in search of new parts, but also digs deeper into the understanding. This process is difficult to translate methodically, but there are a few principles of working that can function as a guide to the interpreter (Ödman, 1994 in Fejes & Thornberg, 2015:80).

As cited by Nussbaum (1995) in Fejes & Thornberg (2015:81) the initial understanding of a situation or context can both be useful and useless in the interpreting. Everyone carries prejudices, convictions and preconceptions and that is a situation to be aware of and relate to during the whole process. The results of a research concerning the phenomena that we interpret, affects us both deliberately and subconsciously. An interpreter needs to be emotionally receptive and look at the material with a perceptive and imaginative sense. In this way she or he might find the more important parts of a text that might go unseen otherwise. The text should speak to the reader and not the other way around, as this might take the reader into a path and angle of approach not thought of before.

A hermeneutics approach does not close the door to the unknown or the unexpected, and that is why hermeneutics is discussed as a theory of knowledge in relation to the willingness, the possibility and the ability to learn from the unknown. The cultural distance between the message and knowledge of the text is to be minimalized by the interpreter and the new knowledge is later to be communicated to others. The aim is to minimize the distance between the interpreter and context in which the texts were written. If the interpreter is not familiar with the context at all, the cultural distance between the interpreter and the phenomena might be an obstacle (Fejes & Thornberg ibid:81).
4 Results and analysis

In this section, the results will be presented in the form of a table and a histogram for each of different syllabi approaches, with an explanation below. The histograms have been made based on how frequently the different content signal words are used in the Swedish and the Japanese syllabus. Each dimension represents one syllabus approach using the Type A and Type B distinctions outlined above; each dimension is defined on the basis of word counts and or predefined “content signal” words which are deemed to give an indication of the focus of the national syllabi.

4.1 Type A

Structural dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Word Classes</th>
<th>Clause Elements</th>
<th>Etc.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By observing the histogram pointing at a structural approach, one can see the only content signal that can be found more than twice in the Swedish syllabus is “structure”, whereas in the Japanese syllabus, both grammar and clause elements are to be found more than 20 times.

Total: 21 + 82 = 103

Sweden: 21 x 100 / 103 = 20.4

Japan: 82 x 100 / 103 = 79.6

Figure 12 Structural table and dimension
### Topical dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Science, sci-fi, fantasy</th>
<th>Human interest/relationships</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Etc.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this table, one can see that only three of the words appeared in the syllabi more frequently. *Culture* and *news* was found 56 times combined, in the Swedish syllabus and only 13 times combined, in the Japanese. The other topical content signals are barely found ten times in any of the syllabi.

**Total**: 82 + 30 = 112  
**Sweden**: 82 x 100 / 112 = 73.2  
**Japan**: 30 x 100 / 112 = 26.8  

![Figure 13 Topical table and dimension](image)

### Situational dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Host family</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The situational content signals were not so frequent in any of the syllabi. The only two that were found were *restaurant* and *airport*, once in the Japanese and none in the Swedish.
Total: $0 + 2 = 2$

Sweden: $0 \times 100 / 2 = 0$

Japan: $2 \times 100 / 2 = 100$

Figure 14 Situational table and dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Complaint</th>
<th>Apology</th>
<th>Introducing</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Etc.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The notional content signal words where only found 10-15 times combined, in both the Swedish syllabus and the Japanese. The functional words where not found in the Swedish syllabus at all, and only ten times in the Japanese syllabus. The Japanese syllabus has a section only focusing on the notional-functional approach, and this is not an aspect that is found in the Swedish syllabus.

Total: $20 + 25 = 45$

Sweden: $20 \times 100 / 45 = 44.4$

Japan: $25 \times 100 / 45 = 55.6$

Figure 15 Notional functional dimension
Skills dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content signals within the skills approach were found repeatedly in both syllabi. *Speaking* and *writing* dominate in the Swedish document, whereas in the Japanese, *reading* and *speaking* are mostly repeated, closely followed by *writing*. One would argue that in Japanese schools, there is less focus on *listening* and *writing* while the main focus is on *speaking*. This can also be seen in Sweden, *speaking* being found 70 times and *writing* 45 times, which is more than in Japan where the two content signals are found 49 times combined.

**Total:** $126 + 91 = 217$

**Sweden:** $126 \times 100 / 217 = 58$

**Japan:** $91 \times 100 / 217 = 42$

![Figure 16 Skills dimension](image)

Lexical dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Idioms</th>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Phrasal verb</th>
<th>Collocations</th>
<th>Etc.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content signals of the lexical approach are not seen at all in the Swedish syllabus, and only five times in the Japanese syllabus.
Total: $0 + 5 = 5$
Sweden: $0 \times 100 / 5 = 0$
Japan: $5 \times 100 / 5 = 100$

Figure 17 Lexical table and dimension

Type A dimension combined with all approaches

Total: $249 + 230 = 479$
Sweden: $249 \times 100 / 479 = 52$
Japan: $230 \times 100 / 479 = 48$

Figure 18 Type A syllabi combined
When combining all of the different dimensions, the results point to a percentage of 52 for Sweden, and a percentage of 48 for Japan.
4.2 Type B  
**Process/Procedural dimension**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learning process</th>
<th>Problem based / task based</th>
<th>Project based</th>
<th>Communicative task</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Swedish syllabus contains of almost half of the content signals from the Type B approach. In comparison to the Swedish syllabus, only the word *communicative* of all of the content signals is repeated in the Japanese syllabus.

**Total:** $35 + 14 = 49$

**Sweden:** $35 \times 100 / 49 = 71.4$

**Japan:** $14 \times 100 / 49 = 28.6$

![Figure 19 Process/procedural table and dimension](image)

4.3 Analysis of the material
The syllabi of the two countries have some similarities, but in many respects diverge significantly from each other. When observing the first dimensions, which according to White (1988) are of a Type A approach, the first dimension, *Figure 12*, the structural dimension, Japan has a word count of 82 to Sweden’s 21 with a difference of 61. When analysing the Japanese syllabus, one can see that the Japanese document has a special section with the different grammatical rules and sections which are to be taught. It is very different to the Swedish syllabus which does not mention *grammar* or *clause elements* and instead refers to *structure* several times.
As earlier mentioned, where Sneider (Parker, 2014) claims that the Japanese textbooks are not made for discussion, one can essentially see and say the same about the syllabus. It is very structured on what the students are supposed to learn, and exactly which grammatical structures, clause elements and phrases are to be taught. The Confucian method taught obedience and devotion, and this could explain why the English, and maybe other syllabi too, are organized the way they are (Platt, 2005). On the other hand, the Swedish syllabus has a frequency of at least 25% of Japan’s frequency which might demand a further analysis. Words semantically related to with structure appears 21 times in the Swedish syllabus, but when looking into the context, this is one example of structure that was found:

How structure and context are built up and how attitudes, perspectives and style are expressed in spoken and written language in various genres.

(Skolverket, 2011:8)

The example above is about the structure of the text in a linguistic sense. In the Japanese syllabus, the same content signals were only found once, although as previously mentioned, this syllabus has a specific section for grammar which is about structure. Furthermore, the Swedish syllabus mentions structure, but not really meaning structure in the grammatical sense, while Japan has a whole section about grammar, and does not mention structure on its own might leading to a possible misinterpretation of both syllabi in terms of their specific focus. Since Japan has a section for the grammar and it is repeated combined with clause elements, one would say that it is more structurally-orientated than the Swedish syllabus, but that the later includes some structural / form focus as well. On the other hand, when observing the frequency table, and looking at the context in which structure is mentioned in the Swedish syllabi, one would argue that it is not structural at all.

When observing Figure 13 with the topical dimension, the Swedish syllabus has a word frequency of over 80, while the Japanese syllabus only has a frequency of 30. Content signals such as culture, traditions and news are frequently used and one could argue that Sweden is a country that is very multicultural and one of the many tasks that the teachers have is to be open minded and introduce intercultural similarities and differences. In Japan, there are not as many nationalities and they do therefore not see this aspect as important as the Swedish syllabus designers. There are also recent waves of immigration to Sweden, and there is therefore a need to promote intercultural understanding.
Figure 14 is a figure showing the situational approach and one can see that this approach is not seen in either of the two syllabi more than a couple of times. The situation here could be that school syllabi perhaps have higher ambitions than helping students to cope in situations of survival. The demands of a school system are higher and other approaches are more favourable for both teachers and students.

Students in Sweden are encouraged to communicate, question and ask why aspects of the learning process are the way they are and that is made very clear in the syllabus. As in the structural approach, in Figure 15, the notional functional dimension, the Japanese syllabus has a special section for notional-functional expressions as well. Expressions such as *complaint*, *apology* and *greeting* are given priority and ought to be learnt by the Japanese students. Although, Sweden has almost as many words included in their syllabus for English, the same structure for it does not exist.

The skills approach which is Figure 16, plays a major part in both syllabi, but the words are more frequently used in the Swedish syllabus. The different skills are found very often but in different measures and the different measures might say something about the country. The Japanese syllabus focuses equally on all four skills whereas the Swedish document focuses almost only on speaking and writing. When looking at both countries, one can claim that the oral proficiency of Swedish students is on a higher level than that of Japanese students.

In the Type B approach, content is subordinate to the learning process and pedagogical practice. It is learner-centred and the importance lies in how the learner is learning and how the process is going. The teacher tries not to intervene in the language learning process and when observing the content signals and how often they appear in the syllabi, one can see how frequently they appear in Figure 18 in the Swedish syllabus; these signals are somewhat less frequent in the Japanese syllabus. The first mentions the student and their interests and abilities many times and one can see how the focus is often put on the student and how she or he is learning and experiencing the language. White (1988) discusses the Type B syllabi where the emphasis is put on the language growing within each person individually in a natural way with the aim of extending their communicative competence and repertoires in real life. The focus is on the learner and how all learners have different preferred ways of learning.
The Education Act (2010:800) explains the Swedish educational system and how it is based on democratic foundations with an aim for the students to acquire and develop knowledge and values, as well as learning and a desire to learn throughout their lives (Skolverket, gy11). One can see that the importance is on the student and their commitment in their learning and how it is constructed for them to have the leading role, as in the Swedish syllabus. The purpose of this statement is intended so that the students can become citizens that are socially integrated and participants with a great knowledge (Skolverket, 1999:42). Letting the students have the leading role goes in accordance with White’s (1988) Type B syllabus where the teacher does not intervene very much and the things are done for the learner instead of to, as in the Type A syllabus. Additionally, the emphasis is also put on the process instead of an emphasis on the subject.

Selander (2003) further discusses the life-long learning and how it has become an international requirement where the task of the school is to teach as many young people as possible, but also to choose the subjects and approach to learning that are most appropriate which in a later stage will lead to a life-long learning. This statement is to a certain extent in line with the new educational reform that came into force in Japan after the American occupation. The aim with the new reform was to support lifelong learning and promote internationalization (Jones, 2010).

It states in the aim in the Swedish syllabus that the English language surrounds the everyday life and is used in politics, education and economics. To have the knowledge of English increases the individual’s opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts which later on can provide new perspectives on the surrounding world. One can tell that it is early on in the aim of the subject that the importance of the cultural contexts and different ways of living is described, and this is also seen when counting the words where the world culture and traditions appear repeatedly in Figure 13. This goes both in hand with the Type A approach, with the topical dimension, as well as the Type B approach where the focus is on the students and their learning process (Skolverket, 2011:42).

The type B syllabi has a non-interventionist approach focusing on experience. The emphasis is on a growth in language proficiency that is natural and aims to extend the learners’ communicative capabilities in real life without any pre-selected or arranged items (White, 1988:45). While the Japanese syllabus has pre-selected items such as learning how to greet,
apologize, complain etc. the Swedish syllabus does not and this can be seen in Figure 15 and in Figure 12. It is very much up to the teacher and learner to plan and make the syllabus their own. While the Swedish syllabus can be very freely interpreted, the Japanese document does not permit the same degree of freedom and this makes the Swedish teachers and students able to plan their lessons based on the context and the individuals learning in it. However, MEXT (2008) do claim that the Japanese syllabus for English is a document which ought to be freely interpreted by the teachers; it is to some extent structured and does not leave very much room for interpretation as one would want.

An educational reform came into being after the American occupation in World War II, which meant that Japan would be democratic with no textbooks promoting nationalism or military teachings. The new reforms had the aim to ease the burden of entrance examinations and support lifelong learning. In Japan, there is a great focus on the entrance examinations of high school, and there is also a shadow educational system mentioned earlier constructed in educating the students to pass the entrance examinations. This is somewhat diametrically-opposed to the life-long learning which is a learning continuing the entire life and was what the reform was supposed to be about (Jones, 2010).

Additionally, the differences in the countries’ English proficiency might lie within the contextual differences between them. English pedagogy is not a total social, economic and political necessity in Japan, as it is in Sweden. Swedish people live in an environment where English surrounds them all the time, from school and the internet to the media and TV in their spare time. Japanese people on the other hand are not surrounded by it in the same way, because Japan is a country which in a practical sense is monolingual. Students in Sweden often study abroad, and so do the Japanese students, but the difference might lie in why they chose to study overseas. The Japanese see it as a much needed opportunity to immerse themselves in the target language and its culture while Swedish people see it as a trip both for their education and for life and might in some cases stay in the foreign country travelled to.

The Japanese context is different from the Swedish one. Introducing English earlier in Japan, in the elementary schools, would appear to be a good idea since starting to learn the language from at an earlier stage in life, makes for better proficiency and greater knowledge. However, since the English language is not seen as a necessity, it might be difficult to find a reason strong
enough for teaching it earlier. As O’Donnell (2003:34) stated, it took over 50 years for Japan to make English a required subject at junior high level at earliest, counting from the year that the English subject was introduced. The abundant impact which is for the worse, are the entrance examinations. They do not require any knowledge other than the writing proficiency which has to do with translation and knowledge of grammar, and listening proficiency which does not seem to have very much room in the examination. When observing the Japanese syllabus and the word frequency of communicative, it has indeed a surprisingly high frequency. The case might be that while trying to give an impression of being communicative, the case is another.

For 200 years, Japan was a closed from the world and there was a general fear of contact with other nationalities within the people. This was held up when they realised that they need to communicate with other countries, but they still maintain the idea of the Japanese language being a symbol of economic power (Gottlieb 2005:36). A fear might have been lifted at the time, but it seems as there is a new fear where the Japanese people believe that their language might disappear and lower the status of the country. They might see that as something that will take their uniqueness away since the majority of the countries have taken the English language near to them, and even something that gives one a higher status. If a person in Sweden has the capability to speak English combined with other languages fluently, a high level of education is indicated. Consequently, the English language has a very different status in Japan compared to its status in Sweden. The TOEIC that Japanese major corporations require their employees to take, rather seems like something they require to look good internationally since the knowledge tested is not used in the workplace (Gottlieb ibid:36).

The English language is only an alternative to the Japanese language, with a relatively unimportant role in the everyday lives of Japanese people (Honna 1995:57). Efforts have been made to internationalize Japan, but the fault might lie in the purpose of learning English, both in school and at work. In school, English is learnt to pass the entrance examinations, and at work, the purpose is for internationalization. There never seems to be a purpose of learning English for own benefit and purpose. Hence, the learner has to gain something that will give recognition such as being accepted to a great university. In Sweden on the other hand, English is seen as something necessary and educational as well as something that could lead to working internationally or just travelling abroad for own purposes.
5 Conclusion

This study has shown that the Swedish syllabus is both a Type A and a Type B syllabus while the Japanese syllabus is more of a Type A than a Type B. There are great contextual differences within the countries and this plays a significant role when discussing the syllabi.

When only looking at the balance in Type A and Type B histograms, one might draw the initial conclusion that both syllabi are more representative of the Type A distinction. The criticism here is that there are more dimensions in the Type A approach than in the Type B, and to sum up all the content signals that were found within the six dimensions, there are a great deal more than in the process/procedural dimension which is the only one for Type B. One can also say that the list of content signal words was not exhaustive, but words are endless, and these are the words chosen for this essay. Although there is an absolute chance that important words have not been taken into account, parallels can be drawn between the dimensions and the content signals tested in this essay.

A method has been put forward for the comparison of English syllabi across the world. The method could be implemented as an application or a computer programme where the word counting of lexical content signals would be automatically carried out using an algorithm. There would be a possibility to only take a country’s syllabus and scan it into the computer. The computer will then count the words and show a frequency. The frequency will include the content signals that are pre-arranged, putting the syllabus on a scale to show if it is more of a Type A or a Type B syllabus. If one country, let us say Japan, which is developing in a slower pace, would want to find out where the problem might lie, they could use this programme. One could make a suggestion to do something about the syllabus and after seeing the results, if they show a general tendency towards a too traditionally-focused syllabus, one could suggest to have it more balanced toward the direction of a type B syllabus. If the research points to the fact that Type B offers a better way forward when discussing language teaching, then it is only good and benefitting for a country to go towards a Type B syllabus. If the syllabus planners of a country want further arguments for verification for doing that, they could just look at their population and how their English is today if they need improvements. If the answer is yes to the question, then the problem might lie in the syllabus and how it is created and built up on too traditional language teaching methods.
6 References


Mark, J. (2010) *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*.


**Internet**


**Figures**

**Figure 1** Language syllabus design: Two types

**Figure 2** Type and Type B approach with focus and example of text books

**Figure 3** Structural test, New Headway

**Figure 4** English/Japanese phrase book

**Figure 6** Lexical textbook in Collins Cobuild English Course (Willis, D. (1993) The Lexical Syllabus A new approach to language teaching Collins Cobuild)

**Figure 7** Levels of language proficiency, the CEFR
Figure 8 Levels of language proficiency in Sweden, in relation to the years

Figure 9 Stages and years in the Swedish educational system, Skolverket, 2011a

Figure 10 Stages and years in the Japanese educational system

Figure 11 Table with dimensions and content signals

Figure 12 Structural table and dimension

Figure 13 Topical table and dimension

Figure 14 Situational table and dimension

Figure 15 Notional functional table and dimension

Figure 16 Skills table and dimension

Figure 17 Type A syllabi combined dimension

Figure 18 Process/procedural table and dimension
Appendix 1: Different approaches with content signals and sub words

Type A

Structural dimension

Content signals:

- Form: Design, pattern, plan
- Grammar: Syntax, elements, fundaments, linguistics, morphology, principles
- Structure: Arrangement, formation, construction, system
- Phonemes: Characters
- Syllable: Diphthong, consonant, affricate, fricative
- Word classes: Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, interjection, numeral
- Clause elements: Subject, object, verb, predicative, adverbial
- Phrases: Verb phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase, noun phrase, adjective phrase

Topical dimension

Content signals:

- Sports: Athletics, game, ball, activity, training, test, exercise, workout
- Food, restaurants: Cooking, cuisine, drink, meal, snack, cafeteria, café, coffee shop, diner, dining room
- Tradition: Heritage, history, culture, custom, ethic, belief, attitude, institution, mythology, ritual, foreign
- Fashion, shopping: Look, model, pattern, trend, tone, spending, purchasing, buying
- Music: Melody, contemporary, opera, piece, rap, rock, singing, soul, tune, acoustic, folk, classical
- News: Broadcast, data, magazines, advertisement, poster, radio, television, newspaper, report, story, statement, announcement, current issues, media
- Travel: Tour, geography, navigation, sailing, flying, driving, trip, movement, sightseeing, transit
- Human interest and relationships: Marriage, contact, love, feeling, relation, homosexual, heterosexual, gender, sex, transgender
- Holidays: Break, celebration, festival, vacation, feast
- Culture: Experience, world, perception, art
- Science, sci-fi, fantasy: Movie, film, scientific, book, futurism, illusion, vision

Situational dimension

Content signals:

- At the bank: Fund, stock, store, deposit, savings, safe, check, card, money, exchange
- Restaurant:
- Airport:
- Host family:
Notional-functional dimension

Content signals:

• Complaint: Accusation, criticism, protest, annoyance
• Apology: Amends, excuse, confession, justification, plea, explanation, admission
• Warning: Threatening, cautioning
• Introducing: Announce, offer, recommend, suggest, acquaint, familiarize
• Inviting: Appealing, charming, encouraging, engaging
• Greeting: Card, hello, letter, nod, ovation
• Leave taking: Farewell, goodbye
• Gratitude: Recognition, thanks, gratefulness, honour, appreciative
• Time past: Past tense, phrases → a month ago, last week
  Utterances, temporal clause → when, before, after
• Concept, idea → Vocabulary, emotion
• Function, functions

Skills dimension

Content signals:

• Listen, listening, listened:
• Read, reading: Micro skills: skim reading, interpret, translate, intensive reading
• Write, writing: Micro skills: essay, novel
• Speak, speaking, spoken, talk: Micro skills: debate, speech, chat, converse, interpret, translate, discuss, rhythm, intonation, present,
  Receptive
  Interactive/productive

Lexical dimension

Content signals:

• References to word counts
• idioms
• corpus
• phrasal verbs
• prepositional verb
• collocations

Type B

Process/procedural dimension

Content signals:

• learning process
• problem-based/task-based
• project-based
• learner-centred
• communicative task