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Cultural Representation in Swedish EFL Textbooks

*Kulturell representation i svenska läroböcker för engelskämnet*

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Abstract

As our world becomes increasingly globalized, the value of understanding cultural diversity is perhaps more relevant than ever. Furthermore, since English plays an important role in the encounters between members of different cultural contexts, analysis of EFL teaching materials is a matter of importance. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how two Swedish EFL textbooks represent cultural diversity. To achieve this, it aims to answer the following research question: To what extent do the textbooks represent cultural diversity within the framework of English as an international language? To answer the research question, this study uses critical discourse analysis as a method for the evaluation. The results indicate that the textbooks show some tendencies of acknowledging the international status of English by including texts from different countries and cultural settings. However, both books still favor representations of Anglophonic countries. Finally, the results suggest that it is important for teachers who use these books to promote critical reflection of how cultures are portrayed.

Keywords: English as an international language, textbooks, culture, critical discourse analysis.
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1. Introduction

During my time as a student in upper secondary school, the use of textbooks in *English as a foreign language* (EFL) classrooms was to a large extent dominating the structure of our courses. Some years after graduating from upper secondary school and starting my education to become an English teacher, it became clear that EFL textbooks still play a vital role in classrooms. The reasons for this could be many. Textbooks are designed according to the curricula and steering documents, which assuredly means that they cover all relevant content. Also, the fact that textbooks have been used for a long time in schools is something that can contribute to the material gaining authority. However, the use of textbooks is not unproblematic. Carlson and von Brömssen (2011) have found that teaching materials, typically in the form of textbooks, often mirror contradictory views and reproductions of problematic, social and norm related categorizations (p.13). Moreover, the guidelines regarding English in relation to culture(s) stated by the Swedish steering documents for upper secondary school, promotes an inclusion of a wide range of cultural perspectives and voices, with the goal of acknowledging the global status of English. This poses an obvious dilemma: is it possible for an EFL textbook to cover the substantial guidelines for teaching culture?

When observing lessons during my very first teacher-practice period, I noticed that much of the material that was used was based around countries that have English as their first language. This was also the case when the focus of the lessons was on culture. It seemed that the majority of the content focused on countries such as the United Kingdom or the United States, and that only a minority of time was set apart for non-Anglophonic, non-Western countries. Keeping in mind the steering documents about how the teaching should revolve around places where English is *used*, rather than places where English is used as the main language, this experience left me rather confused.

English has become a prominent feature of several aspects of life for people all over the world. In diverse areas of society such as education, work life, economics, and politics, the
medium of English is becoming increasingly important as a tool for communication. In fact, one can argue that English no longer ‘belongs’ to Anglophonic countries (countries with English as first language), but should be considered an International Language (Jenkins, Cogo & Archibald, 2011. McKay, 2018). English as an International Language (EIL) allows for a bigger diversity in representations of different English(es) than the more traditional views of Native-oriented English does. Hence, the demands on our ability to understand the values that set out the foundation for a society based on cultural diversity is becoming increasingly extensive. The education of English in schools thus plays an important role in preparing students for a society where knowledge of English becomes more and more necessary and is considered a gateway for understanding and participating in several social and cultural situations (Skolverket, 2011).

It becomes clear then, that EFL textbooks have an extensive and complex task at hand when it comes to providing students with opportunities to understand the values of a culturally diverse society. Therefore, this degree project explores and analyzes how two Swedish EFL textbooks, Viewpoints 1 and Straight Forward, represent cultural diversity within the framework of English as an International Language.
2. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to analyze how different cultures are represented in two Swedish EFL textbooks designed for the course English 5. The study uses guidelines from the curriculum LGY11 as well as the concept *English as an international language* as a framework for the analysis of how the textbooks represent culture. To explore this topic, the study aims to answer the following research question:

- To what extent do the textbooks represent cultural diversity within the framework of *English as an international language*?
3. Literature Review

This chapter sets out to present key concepts and the theoretical framework that underpins this study. It is structured so that it first, gives a background concerning the use of textbooks for educational purposes. Second, it explains the concept *English as an International Language*. Third, it aims to give a definition to *culture* and *interculturality*. Fourth, it presents how the steering documents for LGY11 align with the topic of this study. Fifth, it goes on to explain the theory of *Critical Discourse Analysis* and *multimodality*. Lastly, the chapter includes a brief presentation previous research of cultural representation in textbooks.

### 3.1 Textbooks: Benefits and Limitations

The use of textbooks in language classrooms is extensive, and the use of textbooks can have both benefits and limitations. Richards (2019) argues that there are various reasons behind the choice of incorporating textbooks in language education (p.1). Firstly, he argues that they can provide a clear structure for the course which enforces a sense of security for both teachers and students. Secondly, he suggests that using textbooks can contribute to equality between different groups of students, since using textbooks covering the same guidelines leads to the students taking part of the same material. Thirdly, he claims that textbooks generally maintain quality in the sense that they have been developed according to steering documents and learning principles and contain a variety of learning resources and different types of texts. Finally, textbooks can be efficient in the sense that they help teachers save time and therefore allow them to focus more on teaching than on producing teaching material.

However, when discussing the use of textbooks, it is important to not only take the possible benefits into consideration but also to review problematic aspects. Carlson & von Brömssen (2011) argue that textbooks sometimes contribute to a reproduction of negative, misleading,
and problematic stereotypes and norms. This problem is also illuminated by Richards (2019), who claims that language textbooks tend to idealize the “white middle-class view of the world” (p.2) and that this view is portrayed as a norm. A reason for this idealization and normalization of certain social and cultural groups, can be linked to avoidance of sensitive topics related to power structures. Richards argues that the idealization of certain groups and avoidance of sensitive cultural topics contributes to a lack of diverse content and exclusion of authentic texts (p.2). Moreover, because of the extensive use of English across the world, a common concern regarding EFL textbooks is raised when it comes to representing the international status that English has and it is argued that Western-Anglophonic countries and cultures are overrepresented (McKay, 2018).

3.2 English as an International Language

As the world turns increasingly globalized, the need for communication across national borders is vital. For decades, English has played the role of a lingua franca, meaning that it functions as a communicational bridge between people of non-English backgrounds (Jenkins, Cogo & Archibald, 2011). As the use of English as a lingua franca has become more established, we take a step away from the traditional views of English ‘belonging’ to Anglophonic countries, and start regarding it as an international language that is used across countries and cultures from all over the world (Jenkins, Cogo & Archibald, 2011).

According to research on EIL it is clear that English should not be considered a language bound to national borders. Rather, one can put the term English in to plural form and refer to world Englishes (Kachru, 1991). Moreover, Kachru (1991) divides world Englishes into three concentric circles consisting of inner-, outer- and expanding circle countries. The inner circle refers to countries with English as the first language (U.S, U.K, Australia, etc.) whereas the outer circle refers to countries with English as a second or co-official language (India, Pakistan, South Africa, etc.). The final circle Kachru (1991) refers to is called the expanding circle, and this contains countries where English is used without having an official status (e.g. China, Egypt, Sweden). The non-native English speakers outnumber the native speakers, which arguably further strengthens the importance of EIL.
Since English is regarded an international language, and therefore should not be linked to certain nations, it differs from the teaching of some languages, e.g. French, Korean, and Japanese, where emphasis is put on a specific cultural context (McKay, 2018, p.17). Instead, English as an International Language (EIL) strives to be culture-neutral. The fact that EIL strives for culture neutrality, however, does not mean that it excludes cultural content. In fact, an important feature of EIL is the promotion of engagement with different texts, and speakers critically making cultural assumptions that are inherent in texts based on their own cultural background. Hence, EIL research argues that text does not carry meaning in itself, but that the reader’s cultural references determine the understanding of a text. It is therefore important for learners of English to develop background knowledge, or schemas about structures of cultural phenomena (McKay, 2018, p.18). Furthermore, McKay (2018) highlights that it is important to provide users of English with a wide range of cultural voices and perspectives to develop schemas and to understand and critically engage with how culture can affect the views of ‘international’ issues such as immigration, global resources, governmental issues, climate change, etc. (p.20). Sharifian (2009) argues that EIL is not only important for the mere purpose of international communication, but also highlights its importance as a foundation for interculturality (p.2), a concept which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

3.3 Culture and Interculturality

To define culture is a hard task that can be done in various ways. Kramsch (1998) links culture to language and discourse (the latter is discussed later in this chapter). She claims that the foundation of culture “is always the result of human intervention in the biological processes of nature” (p.24), meaning that natural processes are modified according to social structures. Furthermore, Kramsch (1998) emphasizes that the sense of belonging to a cultural community highly relies on the identification of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ (p.23). This identification is also highlighted by UNESCO (2006), who claims that culture is a set of signs that people of a given context can use as a frame of recognition of others, as well as a way of distinguishing ‘self’ from ‘other’ (p.2). However, it is important to recognize
the power structures behind culture; As Kramsch (1998) puts it: “Cultures, and especially national cultures, resonate with the voices of the powerful, and are filled with the silences of the powerless” (p.23). Therefore, cultural freedom, variety, and representation arguably depend on the voices of those in power.

Culture can also be defined according to different ‘levels’. The Council of Europe (2009), for example, refer to culture as having two levels: the visible and invisible level (p.20). The visible level consists of, as the name suggests, well-known aspects of cultures. These can include language, art, traditions, food, etc. The visible level is also referred to as product-based culture (Lundahl, 2014, p. 122). The invisible level of culture, on the other hand, is related to more deeply rooted aspects such as values and beliefs (Council of Europe, 2009, p.20. Longhurst et.al, 2017, p. 4-6). The invisible level is also referred to as culture as a process (Lundahl, 2014, p. 122). In short, one can define culture as the core of both individual and social identity, and it plays a prominent role in all aspects of an individual’s cognitive and expressional processes (Unesco, 2006, p.12., Longhurst et.al, 2017, p.4-6).

Interculturality is a concept that can be explained as having the goal of building relations between cultural groups. The development of interculturality depends on factors such as openness, curiosity, and cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). The concept is linked to multiculturalism in the sense that a precondition for the existence of interculturality is that society is culturally diverse (Unesco, 2006, p.18). One can argue that society’s rapid globalization process justifies the necessity of developing intercultural competence. This argument is none the least present in educational guidelines (Unesco, 2006., Byram, 1997., Sharifian, 2009), where interculturality is referred to as a gateway to participating in various democratic, economic, social, and cultural aspects of society. Interculturality is a dynamic concept, which means that it is not possible to simply “apply” teaching of the concept in schools. Rather, education needs to be underpinned by an intercultural approach:

Intercultural education cannot be just a simple ‘add on’ to the regular curriculum. It needs to concern the learning environment as a whole, as well as other dimensions of educational processes, such as school life and decision making, teacher education and training, curricula, languages of instruction, teaching methods and student interactions, and learning materials. This can be done through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices. (Unesco, 2006, p.19).
Students therefore need to be provided with opportunities to interpret and relate to cultures, by the exposure of various perspectives and voices (Unesco, 2006, p.19) to be able to develop acceptance, understanding, and self-awareness. The traditional learning context, can however pose a limitation for developing interculturality, as the lack of authentic encounters is a problem. Byram (1997) therefore argues that it is important for teachers to ‘compensate’ for this shortage by including learning material that deals with diverse, authentic, intercultural situations and topics (p.34).

3.4 Theoretical background of Critical Discourse Analysis

*Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) can be explained as a theoretical and methodological approach to study text and talk (Van Dijk, 1995, p.17). In this section, the theory of CDA is at focus whereas methodological issues are discussed later in this paper. To gain an understanding of CDA, we begin by looking at the second word of the concept: *discourse*. CDA relies on discourse, a concept that Johnstone (2008) refers to as being “actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language” (p.17) or, in a broader understanding as “meaningful symbolic behaviour” (p.17). Thus, analyzing discourse suggests that there is more to language than just letters or speech. Rather, there are aspects affecting language, which suggests that there is more meaning behind text and speech than what the letters might spell out; no text or speech is neutral, there are always affecting factors.

Similar to other discourse theories, one can explain CDA as being a “shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotic or discourse analysis” (Van Dijk, 1993, p.131). Moreover, CDA takes a critical approach to the text and speech that is being analyzed. As Van Dijk (1995) puts it: “It is problem-or issue-oriented” (p.17). The fact that CDA typically takes its starting point in highlighting ‘problems’ or ‘issues’ means that the approach often times is used in studies of societal inequality. In order to thoroughly analyze such issues, the analysis explores how surrounding factors, such as politics and culture, affect discourse. More specifically, CDA suggests that different power structures affect texts and that these
should be made visible. Hence, CDA is inter-or multidisciplinary: in order to gain understanding about the meaning of different texts, an understanding of surrounding circumstances is necessary (Van Dijk, 1995, p.17-18). Language use does not function in isolation, instead, it is part of an environment built by a cultural, social, and psychological framework, something that leads to the conclusion that within CDA, language use is a social practice. This social practice is in turn never ‘neutral’, but always underpinned by social, -power, or ideological frameworks (Fairclough, 1996, p.43).

3.5 Multimodality

When researching discourse, it is argued that multimodality contributes to a deeper understanding of social and cultural effects on language (Kaltenbacher et.al, 2004, p.51., Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.2). Multimodal theory sets out to highlight that there are multiple features involved in meaning-making, something referred to as modes. Examples of modes can consist of writing, gesture, gaze, visual images, and the interaction between these modes. It can be considered that teaching in itself is a multimodal activity, since teachers use several modes (such as writing, gesturing, and visual images) to support learners’ needs.

It is also common for teaching material (textbooks) to take a multimodal approach by in addition to text, including pictures (Kress & Bezemer, 2015, p.12-15). It has been argued in the previous section of this chapter that language is underpinned by certain frameworks, and this is also the case for visual images. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) argue that visual images do not have universal meanings, but that the understanding of them relies on the cultural background of the observer. This point of view is also emphasized by Longhurst et.al (2017) who suggest that the interpretation of symbols evoke different connotations depending on cultural context.
3.6 Steering Documents

The two textbooks that have been chosen for this study claim to be designed according to the course English 5. Skolverket (2018) highlights that schools should be viewed as social and cultural venues, and that the schools have both the possibility and responsibility to contribute to students’ ability to take an active part in a culturally diverse society. Furthermore, the curriculum claims that due to the Swedish society becoming rapidly internationalized, an international perspective is important to promote students’ sense of reality in a global context as well as creating national- and international solidarity within the framework of cultural diversity (p.4). The promotion of an international perspective is also apparent in the steering documents for English, where it is stated that:

The English language surrounds us in our daily lives and is used in such diverse areas as politics, education and economics. Knowledge of English increases the individual's opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in global studies and working life. Knowledge of English can also provide new perspectives on the surrounding world, enhanced opportunities to create contacts, and greater understanding of different ways of living. (Skolverket, 2011, p.1).

Furthermore, the core content for English 5 states that the teaching should emphasize “Living conditions, attitudes, values and traditions, as well as social, political and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (Skolverket, 2011, p.3), and that the teaching should acknowledge the international spread of English as well as its powerful position in the world (p.3). A conclusion of the guidelines from Skolverket that are included here, is that English is regarded as an international language and that knowledge of English is important to be able to understand and take part in various social and cultural functions.

3.7 Previous Research

Keeping in mind the importance of acknowledging the power structures affecting language (Fairclough, 1996), it becomes clear that thorough reflection and analysis of the content of
textbooks are important, if not necessary activities to engage in. Song’s (2013) research on Korean EFL textbooks leads her to the conclusion that textbooks on their own are not sufficient in providing learners with opportunities to engage in critical reflection over culture and intercultural relationships (p.388-389). This argument is shared by McConachy (2018), who on the other hand sees the insufficiency of cultural diversity in foreign language textbooks as an opportunity for students and teachers to engage in developing critical awareness of this issue (p.79).

Furthermore, previous research shows that national steering documents take a shift toward emphasizing the international status of English (Song, 2013., Shin et.al 2011). The focus on EIL has in turn allowed for more diverse representations of cultures in EFL textbooks. However, even though textbooks are becoming more culturally diverse, Western-Anglophonic cultures are often still over represented (Pishghadam & Naji Meidani, 2012., Song, 2013). Furthermore, the presentations of cultures in EFL textbooks tend to mainly focus on ‘shallow’ cultural artefacts (Shin et.al, 2011) such as presentations of well-known holidays and traditions rather than putting more emphasis on highlighting intercultural elements. McConachy (2018) adds to this issue by claiming that cultural representations in foreign language textbooks often tend to be simplistic and ethnocentric, which is problematic in the sense that it does not encourage for deep, critical reflection among students. Bigelow (1994) and Kinkaid (1998) also highlight that ‘foreign- third world’ cultures are often portrayed through the tourist gaze, meaning that stereotypical ‘western’ views of third world cultures are often reproduced.
4. Method and Material

This chapter describes and explains the methodology that is used in the process of research and analysis in this degree project. The chapter is organized so that it firstly, presents an explanation of how CDA is used as a method for this study. Secondly, it presents the analytical tool that was used to organize the textbook analysis, and lastly, it explains the selection process of material for the study followed by a description of the procedure of the analysis.

4.1 Methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis

In this study, critical discourse analysis is used as a method for exploring and analyzing cultural representations in two EFL textbooks. Whereas the previous chapter of this paper presents and discusses the theoretical framework of CDA, this section aims to explain the methodology of the concept, and more specifically, how it is used in this study.

As has been mentioned earlier in this paper, CDA relies on the assumption that language use does not function in isolation. Rather, it is part of an environment built within a cultural, social, and psychological framework, something that leads to the conclusion that within CDA, language use is a social practice. This social practice is always underpinned by social, -power, or ideological frameworks (Fairclough, 1996, p. 43). The purpose for using CDA in this study is to analyze how discourse affects the cultural representations in the two EFL textbooks. To accomplish this, a critical examination of the textbooks’ cultural content is applied. This means that it is the content (representation of nations and nationalities, EIL, and intercultural elements) that is explored. Furthermore, CDA is not restricted to analyzing written or spoken language, but can also be used as a multimodal tool of analysis. Hence, CDA allows the researcher to study several elements of expressions, something Fairclough (1996) refers to as semiosis. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that it is a common assumption that visual language is “transparent” and “universally understood” (p.4). In reality, however, visual language should be viewed as
culturally specific; images too, rely on discourse. Therefore, this study does not only focus on the written language of the textbooks, but also discusses and analyzes the visual images included in the books by examining how they contribute to and/or complement the written language.

4.2 Analytical Tool

The analytical tool (see Appendix 1) that has been used to help analyze the textbooks and organize the results (see table at the end of this section) is organized into three main categories along with notes and follow-up questions. The categories are inspired by the ones used by Song (2013), however, they have been adjusted to correlate to the Swedish steering documents and course plan for English 5. The categories are the following:

- Nations and nationalities
- English as an international language
- Intercultural elements

The first category, nations and nationalities, aims to examine the variety of nations and nationalities that are represented in the textbook. Furthermore, it aims to explore whether the textbooks show tendencies of over representing Anglophonic countries. The second category is related to the previous one, since its goal is to explore how the textbooks show English as having the status of an international language (thus not only including text and images representing Anglophonic cultures). The third and last category explores intercultural elements. Specifically, it focuses on three aspects of interculturality: superficial elements, hybridization, and critical reflections (Song, 2013). The first aspect, superficial elements, involve texts and images that focus on cultural products. The products can be related to food, clothing, travel, etc. The second aspect, hybridization, highlights mixtures of values and traditions from different cultures. Lastly, the third aspect, critical reflections, develops the representation of values and tradition by relating them to historical aspects such as conflicts or other events that affect cultural expressions. Furthermore, it emphasizes the interaction between different cultures.
4.3 Selection Process and Presentation of Material

In this section, I explain the selection process for this study. Furthermore, I give a brief presentation of the textbooks that are analyzed in this paper. Due to the limited timeframe of this degree project, I decided to limit the analysis to an amount of two textbooks. The material that was selected to be analyzed are both Swedish, upper secondary EFL textbooks designed for the course English 5, and thus, should be in lines with LGY11. The selection process began with an exploration of the section of English teaching materials at the university library. The criteria that underpinned the search for material was that it should consist of textbooks for the first upper secondary course, English 5. The search resulted in two English 5 textbooks, Viewpoints 1 (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017) and Straight Forward (Harling, Lidén & Thelander, 2006). Both books are published by two of the biggest publishers of teaching materials in Sweden, Gleerups and Natur och Kultur.

Viewpoints 1 is designed quite traditionally in the sense that the structure consists of texts followed by glossary lists and exercises dealing with the content of each chapter. The book is divided into five chapters, each chapter containing 4-5 different texts. The chapters are as follows: Crossing Boundaries, In the name of Love, Fairy Tales with a Twist, Danger Zone, and The Older the Wiser?. The chapters include topics that deal with societal injustice, love, literature, and research on physical and psychological issues that adolescents may face. There are two main reasons why this textbook was chosen as a part of this study. Firstly, it claims to be well-adapted to today’s students and society by including a variety of text types. This to me suggests that the book acknowledges the status of English as an international language in society. Secondly, the authors (2017) state that they include authentic texts, something that is promoted when teaching intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

In contrast to Viewpoints 1, Straight Forward does not include any follow-up exercises to the different texts as they are featured in a separate ‘workbook’. Instead, the book is made up of five chapters, each chapter including six different texts. The chapters are called At Risk, What’s Love got to do with it?, Inside Information, Seekers, and In Your Dreams. The content of these chapter is quite similar to that of ViewPoints 1, since it deals with the same
topics that vary from life challenges, love, and traditions. Similar to the texts in the previous textbook, each section includes a glossary list. There is one main reason why this book was included in the study, and it has to do with the year of publication. *Straight Forward* was published in 2006, hence before the shift of Swedish curricula in 2011. Still, it is labelled as a textbook for the course English 5, and is therefore claimed to be fit for the course English 5. This suggests that even though the book was originally designed for the previous curriculum, its content is considered to be in lines with LGY11. A reason for this decision might be that the previous curriculum is quite similar to the current one. The guidelines from LPF94 (1994) are similar to the ones of LGY11, as they highlight the importance of acknowledging the Swedish society’s internationalization and that the education should promote the values of cultural diversity. Regarding the course English A (which is the equivalent to English 5), the curriculum states that cultures from different countries where English has a central position should be at focus. Hence, the guidelines for teaching culture are very similar between the two curricula.

4.4 Procedure

The procedure of the analysis began with me reading both textbooks to gain an overall understanding of the texts and topics that the books include. Next, I searched for information that indicated nations and nationalities, and used the analytical tool shown in the previous section as a way to take notes and structure the findings. Some sections of the textbooks did not focus on any specific nations or nationalities, therefore, some texts were disregarded. To identify nations and nationalities, I searched for indicators such as explicit references to countries and ethnicities including visual images representing certain places. In addition, I also took notes of features of language use (names, slang, etc.) that suggest that the text is referring to a certain country or part of the world.

When researching cultural representation, I went back to the textbooks for a closer and more thorough read. The analytical tool was used to guide the exploration in the sense that I firstly, identified superficial interactions and secondly intercultural interactions. I did this by taking notes of the topics and analyzing what cultures where portrayed and in which
way it was done. Moreover, I wanted to find out to what degree the texts could promote reflection by exploring in what ways they were written. Specifically, I analyzed if the texts dealt with subjects that could potentially highlight relationships, interculturality, conflicts, and power structures, or if they tended to deal with less problematic, every-day subjects. Furthermore, I explored the visual images that were included in the texts. I wanted to find out what purpose the images had; if they were merely there for an informative or clarifying purpose, or if they served any different purposes that could promote critical reflection. Lastly, I structured my findings according to two main sub-headings: English as an International Language and intercultural elements, with the purpose of presenting to what degree the two textbooks represented cultural diversity.
5. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents, describes, and discusses the results that were found in the textbook analysis of two Swedish EFL textbooks. The findings are presented and analyzed in a way that aims to give an overall answer to the research question for this study: to what extent do the textbooks represent cultural diversity within the framework of English as an international language?

To answer this question, this chapter sets out to firstly, present and discuss the findings related to the textbooks’ representation of English as an international language, and secondly, present and discuss the findings related to cultural representation and interculturality. Furthermore, this chapter includes quotes and descriptions of visual images from the textbooks to exemplify findings and points of analysis. Since the results and discussion of this study are intertwined, the chapter is structured in a way so that it firstly, gives a presentation of the results under each sub-heading. Secondly, each presentation of results is followed by a section that discusses and analyzes the results in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research included in the background chapter of this paper.

5.1 Representation of English as an International Language

This section aims to explore to what degree the two textbooks represent English as an international language. It is structured so that it firstly, examines what countries are represented in the books and seeks to find out whether the textbooks show signs of idealizing ‘the native speaker’. Secondly, it presents an analysis of how the books present different varieties of English, or so called ‘World Englishes’.
5.1.1 Anglophonic countries and native-speaker ideal

The analysis regarding EIL suggests that the two textbooks are mainly focused towards Anglophonic countries and thus promote a native-speaker ideal. The table below (Table 1) represents texts where nations and nationalities are apparent, hence, some texts (e.g. poems and research) in which origin and geography are not mentioned have been excluded from the results. The identification of nations and nationalities is based on explicit references to countries, cities, streets, ethnicities, nationalities, and visual images. Furthermore, ‘subtle’ indicators have also determined the identification: linguistic features and structures specifically related to certain places of the world. The table is divided so that it categorizes nations and/or nationalities into two categories: Anglophonic and non-Anglophonic. Each category is followed by a percentage which indicates to what extent the countries are represented in each textbook. In the right-hand columns the amount of texts including representations of each nation and/or nationality is stated.

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<td>1</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage:</strong></td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td><strong>Percentage:</strong> 21.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Straight Forward</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States (U.S)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>France 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom (U.K)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sweden 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Somalia 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage:</strong></td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Percentage:</strong> 23.9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Table 1 - Representation of Nations and Nationalities*
As can be seen in Table 1, both Viewpoints I and Straight Forward tend to represent Anglophonic countries to a high degree, with Viewpoints 1 showing a slightly higher percentage (78.9% compared to 76.1%). Furthermore, the findings suggest that both textbooks tend to favor Western-Anglophonic nations and nationalities; Viewpoints I refers to the U.K in nine texts and to the U.S in three, and Straight Forward refers to the U.S in ten texts and to the U.K in five. In representing non-Anglophonic nations and nationalities, Straight Forward shows a slightly higher percentage (23.9% compared to 21.1%). Overall, five non-Anglophonic nations are referred to in the case of Straight Forward. As table 1 shows, Viewpoints I represents four non-Anglophonic nations, with one of them remaining unspecified. The reason for this is that the nation is referred to as “an imaginary West African country” (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p.123) called Sengharia.

Similar to previous research conducted in the field of EFL textbooks, these findings suggest that both textbooks that have been analyzed in this study tend to over represent Anglophonic nations and nationalities (Song, 2013., Shin et.al., 2011). Moreover, representations of western countries, more specifically the U.K and the U.S, seem to be favored in both books. These findings are in lines with the arguments of Richards (2018) and Song (2013) who claim that western countries and cultures tend to be idealized and normalized in foreign language textbooks. The concept EIL suggests that, in terms of countries, there is no ownership of English, but that it is spread across the world. Within the field of EIL, it is therefore important to highlight that English can be applied to multiple social and cultural groups and settings, and that the medium of English contributes to ways of understanding and participating in various social and cultural settings (McKay, 2018). This is further emphasized in the curriculum for LGY11 (Skolverket, 2011, p.4), which claims that the global spread and the position of English should be highlighted and applied to the teaching of English. However, the findings that are presented here, seem to misalign with these statements.
5.1.2 Representations of World Englishes

The concept EIL highlights that there is a large amount of English varieties, or so called ‘world Englishes’. By researching linguistic features and variations of the language used in the two textbooks, the results suggest that the books vary to some degree in their representations of world Englishes, where *Straight Forward* tends to mainly include native-like language, and *Viewpoints 1* (although the majority of the language is native-like), shows a somewhat larger variation of English.

Even though *Straight Forward* includes a larger amount of representations of non-Anglophonic countries than *Viewpoints 1* does, all of these are presented through a native-speaker perspective. One example of where this perspective is used in spite of the text dealing with a non-Anglophonic context is a text called *The Rally Princess* (p.17). It deals with a Swedish woman who has a big interest in motocross. In this text, we can read about how her length and weight has not stopped her from partaking in the rough sport: “At only 5ft 3in and weighing not much over 8st, this attractive blonde has become a giant of motocross” (p.17). The measurements that are used here are feet, inches, and stone, none of which are used in a Swedish context. This indicates that the narrative of the story is Anglophonic. There are other parts of the book that also include measurements that are used mainly in Anglophonic countries, for example in a chapter called *Too Much* (p.36) which deals with “Big Pete” who used to weigh 763lb (pounds). Overall, the findings suggest that *Straight Forward* tends to use a language that is quite homogenous with few linguistic and dialectal variations.

Compared to *Straight Forward*, *Viewpoints 1* does include a few more variations of English, although the majority of the language is quite homogeneous and oriented towards British English. For example, in a text called *Doing It*, some typically British phrases are used: “Dino fancies Jackie” and “don’t be daft” (p.55). However, *Viewpoints 1* also includes a few other variations of English, for example in the text *Rendezvous with Evil*: “*He will come, oga, he will come*” (p.124), where oga means chief or boss in Nigerian English. Moreover, the sentence includes a linguistic phenomenon commonly used by
speakers of Nigerian English called *tautology*, which refers to spoken language being repeated without clarifying the meaning of it (Kaan *et al.*, 2013).

The findings that have been presented above suggest that even though the authors of the textbooks seem to have made an aware decision to include texts that relate to outer-and expanding circle countries, the perspectives through which we read the texts are still mainly Anglophonic. This prevents for a variation of different types of Englishes. According to Jenkins, Cogo & Archibald (2011) the world can be viewed as a ‘global village’, a village in which many variations of English are used alongside each other. It is therefore important for teaching materials to highlight the diversity in the use of English. Furthermore, as pointed out by Lundahl (2014), the amount of English speakers who do not have the language as their mother tongue outnumber the ones who do. This fact further adds to the importance of including a larger diversity in the representation of English varieties. In a Swedish context, the idealization and over representation of ‘native English’ could arguably pose as an obstacle in highlighting the international status of English, which is promoted by Skolverket (2011).

Furthermore, Unesco (2006) emphasizes that a variation of voices and perspectives in learning materials is an important feature to highlight cultural diversity and create opportunities for students to develop intercultural competences. The over representation of native English that the results of this study point to however, could potentially be a problematic hinder in this development. According to the results of the previous studies that are presented in chapter 3, the same issue is apparent. The studies describe that inner circle perspectives dominate the texts that are used in the EFL textbooks (Song, 2013., Shin *et al.*, 2011., Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012) which is problematic, since mainly including the same types of perspectives can hinder for a development in interculturality.
5.2 Representation of Cultural Diversity

This section presents the findings of how cultural diversity is portrayed in the two textbooks. It does so by firstly, describing the superficial cultural elements that were found. Secondly, it goes on to describe to what degree the textbooks portray intercultural elements.

5.2.1 Superficial Cultural Elements

As the title of this sub-chapter suggests, this section presents and discusses to what degree the textbooks include representations of ‘superficial’ cultural elements. These elements consist of ‘the visible level’ of culture (Council of Europe, 2009) or what Lundahl (2014) refers to as ‘culture as product’. Thus, the cultural elements that are presented here can be linked to traditions, clothing, movies, music, literature, and so on.

In Viewpoints 1, excerpts from famous literature are included to present parts of culture, and these excerpts make up the majority of the superficial cultural elements. However, the literature included mainly deals with cultures from Anglophonic countries. For example, a poem by Elisabeth Barret Browning (p. 44) and an excerpt from a Shakespeare play (p. 205) are used to present some of the cultural history of the U.K. These texts also include pictures of the authors. Furthermore, excerpts from literature representing high schools, accompanied with pictures from traditional school settings represent American culture. When it comes to superficial representations of outer-and expanding circle countries, Viewpoints 1 steps away from literature. Instead, it is features of texts that can be considered superficial. For example, in a chapter called Boy Kills Man, Colombian lifestyle is referred to as being influenced by crime and poverty, as can be read in the introduction of the text:

Shorty and Alberto live in the South American city of Medellin, in Colombia. They are both 12 years old and small-time criminals. But Alberto is also a child assassin, frequently hired by drug barons, who has just bought a gun with money earned from his latest kill. And when he finds out that his best friend Shorty has been badly beaten by his uncle, he threatens to go ballistic. (p.145).
Although the chapter referred to cannot be described simply as a representation of superficial cultural features, there are reasons to question it. Firstly, since this is the textbook’s only representation of Colombia, it excludes for an understanding of various perspectives of Colombian culture and lifestyle. Instead, it focuses on portraying it as underpinned by danger, tragedy, and crime. Secondly, one can question the linguistic structure of the first sentence of the quote: “Shorty and Alberto live in the South American city of Medellin, in Colombia [...]” (p.145). The order in which the city is presented suggests that South America, rather than Colombia, is more (or at least as) relevant when presenting Medellin. This in turn arguably presents a stereotypical view of South America as being one, without much variation between the countries and cultural contexts that South America consists of. Lastly, the visual image that is included in the chapter (p.144) shows a boy wearing only a pair of dirty shorts, leaning against a wall covered in graffiti, which further reinforces the sense of poverty.

Image 1 - From “Boy Kills Man”

In *Straight Forward*, descriptions of inner circle countries also make up for the majority of superficial cultural elements. As in the case of *Viewpoints 1*, excerpts of literature and movies were identified in *Straight Forward*, e.g. *Gone with the Wind* and *West Side Story*. All examples of cultural artefacts like these deal with contexts centered around Anglophonic countries with American culture playing a specifically prominent role.
The chapters that deal with non-Anglophonic countries at times give a simplified and stereotypical representation of culture. For example, in the chapter called *The Rally Princess*, a Swedish woman is described as “an attractive blonde” (p.17), and referred to as “a Viking” (p.19). These characteristics can be considered common stereotypes of Swedish women and moreover, a stereotypical representation of Swedish culture. In the case of *Straight Forward*, *The Rally Princess* is the only representation linked to Swedish culture, hence, other variations of the ‘typical Swede’ are excluded. Furthermore, a text called *Too Much Love Will Kill You* presents South Africa by including topics such as poverty, prostitution, townships, and HIV (p.54-57). The visual image, Image 2, that is included in this text portrays a South African woman sitting on an old, rusty metal bed with no mattress with a baby in her arms. She is faced so that she is looking away from the camera and has a neutral expression on her face. The image seems to portray hardships and poverty and contributes to a negative and problematic view of South Africa. Although these are topics that should not be forgotten or diminished, it is a highly simplified view of a diverse country.

As is claimed by McConachy (2019), foreign language textbooks often tend to give simplified and stereotypical presentations of cultures which in turn can lead to negative stereotypes being reproduced. Furthermore, what Lundahl (2014) refers to as ‘culture as product’ can enhance this reproduction. Culture as product can relate to cultural artefacts representing culture, but it also refers to culture as being static. One can therefore argue that the textbooks include elements of product based culture in the sense that literature and movies are used to represent cultures, but also in that cultures of ‘poor’ and ‘challenged’
countries (Colombia and South Africa) are represented only through poverty and challenges. Moreover, in the case of *The Rally Princess* it is stereotypical descriptions of appearance that exemplify Swedish people.

Although the textbooks that have been analyzed here do include some superficial cultural elements, it is not done to the same degree as previous research has suggested. Compared to the research conducted by Song (2013, p. 386) for example, *Viewpoints 1* and *Straight Forward* show a lower amount of superficial descriptions. The elements that have been identified, however, are mainly linked to Anglophonic contexts. This is rather surprising, since a presumption I had before the analysis was that it would be mainly outer-and expanding circle cultures that would be described in a superficial way. On the contrary, the findings suggest that it is the ‘dominating’ cultures that are described in a simplified, un-problematized manner, whereas ‘minority cultures’ are described in a more nuanced way.

Assuming that the majority of the students that use these textbooks mainly identify with the ‘dominating’ culture, it becomes problematic that the representation of this culture is superficial. Byram (1997) claims that it is vital to know your own culture in order to relate to others’ and develop interculturality. Thus, one can argue that it is important for teaching materials to provide students with texts that promote reflection and problematizing of not only ‘other’ cultures, but also for one’s own. Moreover, McConachy (2019) highlights the possibility and the importance of using foreign language textbooks as a foundation of critically engaging with superficial portrayals of cultures; something that he argues a majority of foreign language textbooks tend to include. For teachers who use the textbooks that have been analyzed here, one could argue that McConachy’s perspective of critically engaging and analyzing how cultures are represented, is very important.

5.2.3 Intercultural Elements

Since Anglophonic countries and cultures make up for the majority of both textbooks, it is perhaps not surprising that it is the stereotypical ‘western’ culture related to Anglophonic countries that is portrayed as the norm. The texts that deal with this type of culture does so
without questioning and problematizing the cultural portrayal, whereas the chapters that deal with cultures from the outer-and expanding circles generally do so by highlighting issues such as poverty, inequality, crime, and injustice. Moreover, the representations of cultures are mainly portrayed in isolation from each other, meaning that there are few examples of explicit communication between characters from different cultures. When a relationship between members of different cultural communities is portrayed, it is usually in a context of conflict (e.g. the civil rights’ movements in America and forbidden love affairs between people of different cultures). Furthermore, a recurring theme regarding interculturality in the textbooks, is that the situations are usually experienced through an Anglophonic perspective. An example of this is a chapter in Viewpoints 1 called “Rendezvous with Evil”, where the introductory paragraph states the following:

17-year-old Charlie is a privileged white boy who lives in an imaginary West African country (Sengharia). One night he goes out with his friend to have some fun but the evening doesn’t end well and one of the boys gets badly injured. The principal of the American school that Charlie attends then finds out what happened and threatens to expel Charlie and his friend Guppy (p.122).

It is clear from this quote, that even though the story takes place in a west African country, American characters and culture is still a main theme. The non-Anglophonic characters play the ‘supporting roles’ whereas the American boy Charlie is the main character and interpreter. One can argue that the representation of the country’s culture is therefore seen through ‘the tourist gaze’ (Bigelow, 1994., Kinkaid, 1998). This is problematic, since it leads to the portrayal of ‘Sengharian’ culture being mirrored through the eyes of an American and thus, lacks authenticity. According to Byram (1997) authenticity in representations of cultures is an important factor to promote interculturality among students. Preferably, this should happen through ‘real’ encounters between members of different cultures, but since the traditional school setting normally does not allow for this, these encounters need to be portrayed through teaching materials. As Sharifian (2009) argues, the diversity of voices and cultural perspectives promoted by the framework of EIL is a gateway to intercultural competence. Thus, the teaching material that is incorporated in
English classes should be underpinned by careful and critical consideration of what cultures are included and how the interaction between the cultures is portrayed.

Moreover, according to Song (2013) and McKay (2018), part of interculturality is to highlight conflicts and the effects social and political discourses can have on cultures which is something that both textbooks do. However, the findings of this study suggests that this is mainly the case when it comes to non-Anglophonic, non-Western countries and cultures. This then tends to send the message that the non-normative cultures have more struggles and suffer from a sense of oppression. Even though this is something that is important to highlight, it can also lead to simplified images and portrayals of these cultures which could be harmful (Richards, 2019). The inner circle cultures, on the other hand, are described in a much less problematized way. They generally deal with ‘every-day topics’ such as love and interests, which leads to these texts being easier to identify with. This is, however, also a very simplified view of ‘western’ culture and could arguably be described as a product based view of culture (Lundahl, 2014), meaning that the dominating culture is viewed as static and therefore not in need of further questioning or description. The simplified view of ‘western’ culture suggests that it is the culture that the students relate to, and do not necessarily leave the students with any questions; the western culture becomes the norm. As stated by Kramsch (1998) and Fairclough (1996) cultural representation always relies on power structures. Since the western culture is generally looked upon as the dominating one, it is vital to question this culture as well.
6. Conclusion

This section aims to conclude this paper by firstly, summarizing the results of the study based on the research question. Secondly, it discusses the limitations of the study, and lastly, provides suggestions for further research.

6.1 Discussion of Results

The research question for this study is: *To what extent do the textbooks represent cultural diversity within the framework of EIL?* The answer to this question is that the textbooks do show some adaptation to our internationalized society and the role that English plays in it by representing countries from both the inner-outer- and expanding circles. However, when analyzing the results, it is clear that Anglophonic countries (especially the U.K and the U.S) still make up for the majority of the representations. The representation of Anglophonic nations and nationalities make up for 78.9% of the texts in *Viewpoints 1* and 76.1% in *Straight Forward*. This result suggests that the textbooks still tend to look upon Anglophonic nations as the main ‘owners’ of English which goes against the framework of EIL that states that English should be regarded as a tool for international communication rather than constrained to national borders (McKay, 2018).

The findings regarding cultural diversity align with those of representation of nations: Western-inner circle cultures are represented to a higher degree than those of the outer-and expanding circles. However, it was surprising to see that the portrayal of the ‘dominating’ cultures was described more superficially than those of the ‘minority’ cultures, by mainly dealing with every-day topics. The ‘minority’ cultures on the other hand, tend to deal with more deeply rooted aspects of culture such as poverty, crime, and injustice. The different ways of portraying cultures are, to me, concerning. It might lead to a higher degree of critically questioning ‘other’ cultures while not reflecting over one’s own. This could in
turn further strengthen the existing power structure that promotes, normalizes, and idealizes ‘western’ cultures over others (Richards, 2019).

Keeping in mind the results that have been discussed here, I think that it is important for teachers who use these types of learning materials to promote critical reflection of how culture is presented. Furthermore, I hope that the result of this, as well as that of other studies can help inspire a wider, more diverse selection of texts included in future EFL textbooks.

6.2 Limitations

In spite of the findings that have been presented, it cannot be disregarded that there are limitations to this study. Firstly, the results are only based on two textbooks, which means that no general conclusions about cultural diversity in EFL textbooks can be drawn. Secondly, the time frame for this paper contributes to the fact that I have had to be selective in what to include in the results. Hence, this prevents from a more overarching and detailed analysis of the topic. Lastly, this paper has focused on cultural representations in EFL textbooks in general with the goal of achieving a general understanding of the topic. However, there are of course many approaches to researching culture in textbooks that could lead to a more detailed understanding of specific cultural features, e.g. analysis of gender representation or character agency.

6.3 Further Research

Since textbooks are widely used in educational settings, they play a vital part in providing our students with knowledge. Considering the results of this research project, further evaluation of cultural representations in textbooks is important to ensure students’ preparation for society. Specifically, it would be interesting to see analysis done in the field of LGBTQ representation in Swedish EFL textbooks. The books that were included in this study included no examples of characters belonging to the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, relationships between characters in the books where described in quite a
stereotypical way: that boys fall in love with girls and girls fall in love with boys. Hence, both books display heterosexuality as the norm, which suggests exclusion towards people identifying themselves in different ways.
References


http://discourses.org/OldArticles/Aims%20of%20Critical%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf


https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006
# Appendix

## Appendix 1

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<td>English as an International Language</td>
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<td>Intercultural Elements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How are different cultures presented? -Superficial interactions -critical reflections</td>
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Analytical tool for the study.