Post-Colonial Reading:
Cultural Representations of Ethnicity and National Identity in English Textbooks for Swedish Upper Secondary School

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine if English textbooks offer a cultural perspective of the English-speaking world in accordance with Swedish ordinances and recent research. The research question is: How is the English-speaking world culturally represented in English textbooks for Swedish upper secondary school course A in terms of ethnicity and national identity? The study comprises four textbooks from 2000 or later. The analysis is carried out within the framework of post-colonial theory. Four aspects are focused on: the ideological point of view, the representation of ethnicity, the representation of national identity and how these issues correspond to the ordinances. The results display that the books contain almost no biased stereotypes and that they fulfil several, if not always all, of the requirements of the English syllabus. All books include texts that provide balanced information about the ways of living, the cultural traditions and the historical conditions of a few selected countries. There are also exercises and activities that encourage intercultural understanding. However, the focus is mainly on the West and the view of culture is remarkably often based on national and monolithic assumptions. In particular, the positive values of cultural and ethnic diversity are still not fully acknowledged. In order to develop international solidarity and greater understanding and tolerance of other people, a higher degree of post-colonial and diasporic writing is needed. Above all, cultural issues have to be allowed to imbue the entire material.

Key words: English textbooks, culture, ethnicity, national identity, post-colonialism, upper secondary school
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Introduction

It has been said that the most important reason to learn another language is to open up for the world around. I believe that this can be achieved, at least to some extent, through the study of texts. Literature can widen one’s intellectual horizon. An English schoolbook with a variety of post-colonial texts from different parts of the world could, the way I see it, create a deeper understanding of other cultures and inspire to a sense of international solidarity, at the same time as it could sharpen the learner’s awareness of her own cultural background.

In language teaching, “culture” is a term of increasing importance, but also of great complexity. According to Magnus Persson in Varför läsa litteratur?, the curricula and syllabuses in Swedish school have taken a “cultural turn” (28). The curriculum for upper secondary school emphasizes an “international perspective”, where “international solidarity” will prepare the pupils for a society with “cross-cultural” and “cross-border” contacts (Curriculum 6). In the English and Modern languages syllabuses, “culture” is a general theme. International research has shown a growing interest in cultural issues in language teaching and in Sweden the debate has been led by, among others, Ulrika Tornberg and Eva Gagnestam. As we will see, both Tornberg and Gagnestam propose a rethinking about culture, advocating a view more compatible with today’s multicultural and globalised societies.

As a trainee teacher, I have been preoccupied with the difficulty in integrating culture in language teaching. This has partly to do with the frequent use of textbooks. As Gagnestam notes in Kultur i språkundervisning, textbooks have traditionally played a dominant role in language teaching and their contents have seldom been questioned (141). Indeed, a recent study shows that three out of four English teachers in Swedish compulsory school use textbooks almost every lesson (Läromedlens roll i undervisningen 91). In English teaching, the texts studied usually serve for further exploration of a particular theme or area of interest, but they may or may not be suitable for cultural “work”. Instead, my experience is that some texts might even fall into the trap of creating or perpetuating biased and simplified images. As Luis Ajagán-Lester explains in “Text och etnicitet”, all texts in school contribute to the formation of certain images of foreign cultures, and also to the construction of certain ethincal understandings of the self (121-122). One recently developed field of research that deals with these complex issues is “post-colonial studies”. Described in A Glossary of Literary Terms as “[t]he critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers” (Abrams 245), it has during the last decades drastically reshaped the way of dealing
with cultural issues in many different areas. As Persson argues, literary criticism has taken a “cultural turn”, which involves amongst other things a radically widened notion of “text” and an interest in multiculturalism (64).

This dissertation will be dedicated to the study of “culture” in English textbooks. The textual analysis will be based on recent post-colonial theories and centred on the categories “ethnicity” and “nationality”.

**Background**

**Basic Definitions**

There is some basic but notoriously ambiguous terminology that needs to be defined before proceeding. First, my definition of “culture” is broadly anthropological. In *Representation*, Stuart Hall states that culture can be used in the sense of “the ‘way of life’ of a people, community, nation or social group” (2). Alternatively, “culture” can also be described as the “shared values” of a group or society. In particular, it is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings (Hall 2). From this perspective, culture does not primarily concern aesthetics or the arts (“high culture”), but processes and practices created and lived by individuals in their social interaction with others.

In this context, “representation” basically means “the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning” (Hall 61). In the wide sense of “text”, visual arts and social practices can be analysed as if they were language. Roland Barthes uses this “semiotic” approach to “read” culture in terms of ideology and “myth” (Hall 36-39). Another approach is the Foucaultian “discourse analysis”, in which “power” is a central term. According to Foucault, it is “discourses”, or “regulated ways of speaking about objects”, which construct, define and produce “the objects of knowledge in an intelligible way”, Chris Barker informs in *Cultural Studies* (101). However, for the discourse to make sense and become meaningful we have to locate ourselves in its “subject-positions”. In any narrative, Claire Kramsch explains in *Language and Culture*, there is also an ideological point of view that “reveals the system of beliefs, values, and categories, by which the narrator comprehends the world he/she refers to in the text” (61). Moreover, representation necessarily involves questions of inclusion and exclusion and therefore power (Barker 263). As Kramsch asks: “Who has the authority to select what is representative of a given culture: the outsider who observes and studies that culture, or the insider who lives and experiences it?” (9). The fact is that representing “the
Other” has often been made in terms of “stereotypes”, by which it is meant “vivid but simple representations that reduce persons to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, characteristics” (Barker 263). To conclude, representation can be viewed both in terms of semiotics and discourse, and involves issues of power and ideology.

By “ethnicity” I refer to a discursive “process of boundary formation that has been constructed and maintained under specific socio-historical conditions” and that is “centred on the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices” (Barker 250). In Colonialism/Postcolonialism Ania Loomba affirms that a “nation” can be seen as an “imagined community” (156). While the “nation-state” is a political concept that refers to an administrative apparatus, the “national identity” is “a form of imaginative identification with the symbols and discourses of the nation-state” (Barker 252). Thus, both ethnicity and national identity are historically specific social constructs.

Finally, there are several terms for cultural meetings. Kramsch tells that “intercultural” (or “cross-cultural”), usually refers to “the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states”, or to “communication between people from different ethnic, social, gendered cultures within the boundaries of the same national language”. A similar term is “multicultural”, which in its societal sense “indicates the coexistence of people from many different backgrounds and ethnicities” and in its individual sense “characterises persons who belong to various discourse communities” (Kramsch 81). In this way, the term multicultural implies a higher degree of cultural blending than the term intercultural.

The Notion of Culture in Swedish Curricula and Syllabuses

The Swedish National Agency for Education clearly states that textbooks should support the principal tasks of the school system and not violate its fundamental values (I enhet med skolans värdegrund? 6). What is then the view of “culture” in the rules and regulations for the Swedish school?

Already in 1985 the parliament decided that an “intercultural perspective” should characterise all education (Gagnestam 79). In ”Språksynen i dagens kursplaner” Per Malmberg affirms that “intercultural understanding” is central to the view of language in today’s syllabuses and he traces the intercultural interest back to the curriculum of 1994 (19). The reason for the new emphasis on cultural meetings can be found in the description of Swedish society: “The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place great demands on people’s ability to live together and appreciate the values
that are to be found in cultural diversity” (Curriculum 3-4). Here, the multicultural society is viewed as an inevitable challenge. In this way, language teaching has the supposed task to prepare the students for the effects of globalisation. Persson argues that in the ordinances it is generally believed that culture has a stabilising and harmonising function (55). Persson traces an underlying figure of thought, “culture is always good”, which contributes to the understanding of culture as including and democratic (34). However, this is a contradictory project, Persson explains, because culture always involves limits and hierarchies, especially in relation to the Other (55).

In the English syllabus for upper secondary school from 2000, one of the aims of the subject is “the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures” (Syllabus). Clearly, this is an acknowledgement of English as a world language and therefore a rejection of the favouring of any particular region, culture or dialect. Furthermore, in the same syllabus it is asserted that the school should endeavour to ensure that the pupils “reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures”. Under the heading “Structure and nature of the subject” it is maintained that the “ability to reflect over similarities and differences between their own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries is developed continuously, and leads eventually to an understanding of different cultures and inter-cultural competence” (Syllabus). A similar formulation is found among the criteria for pass of the course A, where the pupils are supposed to “describe the position enjoyed by the English language in the world, as well as, on the basis of a knowledge of societal conditions and customs in areas where English is spoken, make comparisons with their own cultural experiences” (Syllabus). The recurring theme is on the one hand the comparison between English-speaking cultures, and on the other between foreign cultures and “own cultural experiences” in order to achieve “inter-cultural competence”. The question is how these comparisons can be made, and how cultural competence can be achieved.

In Språkdidaktik Tornberg argues that in order to be able to compare cultures, they necessarily have to be dealt with as well-defined and fixed entities (52). However, the simultaneous focus on multiculturalism creates an inherent tension in today’s ordinances, Tornberg asserts in Om språkundervisning i mellanrummet (64). Maybe the notion of “own cultural experiences” in the English syllabus from 2000 instead of the previous wording

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1 Since the Syllabus for English is an Internet source, no pages numbers can be given.
“Swedish conditions” signals a change of perspective, Tornberg suggests in *Interkulturalitet* (181). To take culture down to the personal level would be more in harmony with the talk about cultural diversity.

**Aim and Problem**

The general aim of this study is to examine if recent Swedish textbooks for the subject English in upper secondary school offer a cultural perspective of the English-speaking world in accordance with the directions about “culture” in the English syllabus, the fundamental values of the curriculum and recent research in the field. The central problem that I want to investigate is:

*How is the English-speaking world culturally represented in English textbooks for Swedish upper secondary school course A in terms of ethnicity and national identity?*

This overall problem can be further divided into the following questions:

- *From what ideological point of view, or perspective, are the texts narrated?*
- *How is ethnicity represented in the texts?*
- *How is national identity represented in the texts?*
- *How are the issues of ethnicity and national identity related to the overall view of “culture” in the curriculum and the English syllabus?*

My working hypothesis is that contemporary English textbooks still present a simplified and idealised Western view of the English-speaking world with monolithic national cultures and stereotyped images of the Other. Therefore, they do not live up to the expectations of the Swedish ordinances and researchers such as Tornberg.

**Theory**

**Post-Colonial Studies**

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain in *The Empire Writes Back* that today English is a world language and the publication of literature in English is dominated by the former British colonies (191). Consequently, it is not enough to deal with solely British texts in school. In fact, all texts from the imperial centre “can be made to serve colonial interests through educational systems that devalue native literatures, and by Euro-centric practices which insist on Western texts being markers of superior culture and value” (Loomba 75).

This dissertation is based on post-colonial theory. In the analysis, I have chosen to focus on the notions of English/english, the Other, difference, diaspora and hybridity, and these will
now be discussed in detail. I use the term “post-colonial” to cover “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonizatio to the moment of today” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2). Another way of defining “post-colonialism” is as “the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism”. This flexible interpretation can be preferred, since it allows the inclusion of people geographically displaced by the effects of colonialism (Loomba 16). However, it can be pointed out that post-colonial critics are not only interested in “post-colonial literatures”, but attention is also paid to the re-reading of “canonical” text in the light of post-colonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 191-192).

In post-colonial theory, a distinction is normally made between “English”, the standard code of the former imperial centre, and “english” (or “englishes”), the local ways in which the language has been employed (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8). In fact, “[t]he crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 37). Also other institutions and practices, such as literature and education, are objects of the process of marking “difference” and subverting the condition of Otherness imposed on the post-colonial subject (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 77). In Edward Said’s Orientalism, colonial discourse analysis is used to show how European “knowledge” about “the Orient”, projected as the Other, has been accompanied by colonial power and ideology (Loomba 42-45).

Recent post-colonial theories tend to stress plurality, movement and the instability of culture. The concern with place and displacement has become even more complex now in the era of globalisation. The notion of “diaspora” can be understood as “a dispersed network of ethnically and culturally related people”, characteristically produced by “forced dispersal and reluctant scattering” (Barker 255-256). Referring to the refugee crisis in the West, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin affirm that the “dispersal” of significant numbers of people can be seen to be a consequence of the disparity in wealth between the West and the world, extended by the economic imperatives of imperialism and rapidly opening a gap between colonizers and colonised” (217). Still, strategic writing in diaspora “might disrupt the binary of local and global and problemise national, racial and ethnic formulations of identity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 218).

The concept of “hybridity”, which “commonly refers to ‘the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation’”, is a useful tool for “highlighting cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity” (Laragy par. 2). Homi Bhabha reminds us of the fact that there are no “pure” cultures: hybridization is the
mixing of what is already a hybrid (Barker 258). For the individual, multiple identities are inevitable, because identities are never pure nor fixed but formed at the intersections of various categories such as class, gender and nationality (Barker 260). For instance, the new black ethnicities in Britain can be seen as “the results of ‘cut-and-mix’ processes of ‘cultural diaspora-ization’” (Loomba 148). This process view of identity formation goes hand in hand with the idea that our identity is formed in encounters with others in a constant social dialogue (Ajagán-Lester 132; Tornberg, *Om språkundervisning* 71). Textbooks are structures of meaning, and therefore also assist the creation of identity by presenting an image of the pupil’s own culture and other foreign cultural spheres (Ajagán-Lester 132). In this way, what images school texts present becomes a highly important matter.

**Culture in the Language Classroom**

It can be argued that we are experiencing a paradigmatic shift of the way culture is dealt with in the foreign language classroom. The traditional use of culture as finished and “objective” facts and knowledge about a national culture (“realia” or “Kulturkunde”) is being substituted for the view of language as a social practice where culture is the core that imbues all language teaching (Gagnestam 12-16). In the case of English in Swedish schools, a study that Gagnestam has conducted demonstrates that teaching in upper secondary school mainly concerns England/Britain (121). Instead, Gagnestam asserts, English should be learned as the multicultural world language that it unarguably is (153-154).

Tornberg argues for a shift from culture as an “observable product” to culture as a “process” in which the individual is involved (*Om språkundervisning* 24). One common view of culture is as a “fact fulfille”, a uniform national culture that can be studied. However, this is for several reasons an unsustainable position. First, as Kramsch argues, the language classroom constitutes its own culture that is created and recreated by those who work there. Second, it is unavoidable that teachers and textbook authors are biased by their own cultural background. Third, most classrooms are ethnically diverse and it does not make sense anymore speaking of a Swedish national culture. In fact, the traditional view can sustain discourses that preserve or even enhance dichotomies like we - them (Tornberg, *Om språkundervisning* 66-67, 71). Also another common view, culture as a “future competence”, is rejected by Tornberg, because it presupposes the existence of a unitary native speaker’s language as well as patterns of behaviour that can be taught and learned (Tornberg, *Om språkundervisning* 85). Evidently, variations within the culture are excluded and only dominant expressions will be regarded.
Instead, Tornberg strongly advocates the “encounter in an open landscape”, where an always ongoing cultural process on a personal level is created in the space “in between”, the “third space”. Learners are no longer passive consumers of a “mainstream culture” offered by the teacher or the textbook, because they create their own culture in the unique encounter between “me” and “you” (Tornberg, *Om språkundervisning* 85-86). Thus, the ultimate textbook would highlight difference and provide for a fruitful encounter with the Other in order to promote tolerance, even if difference cannot always be understood or learnt as a fact.

**Previous Research on School Texts**

Few studies of foreign language textbooks have been made. Nevertheless, research on teaching media in other subjects can provide useful findings. The educational system can be situated in a larger context of textual production, where texts (in the wide sense) are seen as cultural products. Pedagogical school texts do not only inform, convey knowledge and explain, but also select, so that some world-views and values are reproduced, and others silenced (Ajagán-Lester 121-122).

Ajagán-Lester claims that schoolbooks often contain Eurocentric discourses, by which he means the hierarchical privilege of the European perspective (131-133). Ajagán-Lester illustrates this with his study on the Other in historical accounts about the “discovery” of America. He finds that among the Latin American texts used for first language education, the encounter between the Europeans and the indigenous population is generally described in a Eurocentric discourse. However, Ajagán-Lester also shows how a Swedish textbook for compulsory school proves to be anti-Eurocentric. Obviously, the origin of the text does not necessarily govern the hierarchy of its discourses. Ajagán-Lester suggests that school texts should apply a “multiple perspective”, where historical descriptions of foreign cultures are “decolonised” and other voices and points of view are incorporated (Ajagán-Lester 131-133).

In 2006, the Swedish National Agency for Education published a report called *I enlighet med skolans värdegrund?*, a survey of 24 schoolbooks in biology and natural science, history, religion and social studies. Albeit it does not specifically treat language teaching, the analysis concerning ethnicity is relevant. The books were studied according to five categories found among the fundamental values of the school: ethnic attachment, functional disabilities, gender, religion and sexuality. For each category, three factors were examined: the explicit presentation of categories and groupings, the meanings ascribed to these representations and “positive examples” such as the transgressing of stereotypes (14). The conclusion was that the books do not contain any directly discriminating ethnic stereotypes, nor is the perspective
consistently Eurocentric. Nevertheless, the fact that Sweden is multicultural society is normally neglected and the notion of the West seldom problemised (I enlighet med skolans värdegrund?).

There is only one short example of a textbook analysis from the area of foreign languages. In Om språkundervisning i mellanrummet, Tornberg examines two different teaching media for German from the 1990s in terms of communication and culture. She finds that “culture” is in both texts seen as facts and information about typical patterns of behaviour and that it is often contextualised in themes (258). In one of the books, however, attempts are made to compare cultures, even with personal experiences (246).

**Method**

**Selection**

The first methodological task is the selection of material: four textbooks for upper secondary school course A. A logical way of selecting would be according to frequency, that is to say sales returns. There are, however, no such statistics available (I enlighet med skolans värdegrund? 16). Therefore, other criteria have been applied. Among the books commonly available at libraries, only those published after 2000 have been considered, the year when the new syllabus was presented. Moreover, only textbooks or all-in-one books that are directed towards the A-course and that are not specifically recommended for the vocationally-oriented programs have been selected. The final candidates are Action! (2004), Blueprint A (2002), Real Time 1 (2002) and Short Cuts 1 (2001)².

A further delimitation is that analysis of the textbooks will be focused mainly on the texts themselves. Both fictional and factual written texts will be examined, as well as the corresponding exercises, because they may give an indication of the intended uses of the text. Illustrations will be briefly commented upon as well, because they are also cultural representations that may tell something about the view of ethnicity and nationality. It has to be remembered that pictures can be interpreted as if they were texts, which is a common method in Cultural Studies³. Also the teacher’s guides (when available) will be searched for information about the intentions of the authors and suggestions for textual work. Listening comprehensions and other recorded material will not be analysed, but if they are accompanied

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² For reasons of clarity and convenience, henceforth I cite the textbooks using shortened titles (not author).
³ See Hall for analyses of representation in for example advertising and news.
by written texts or illustrations that have something to add to the chapters or themes, they are sometimes commented on. Grammar and grammar exercises will not be considered.

**Techniques for Data Acquisition**

The technique that will be employed in the analysis goes under the covering term of “textual analysis”. It has its background in the hermeneutic theory of science, based on the idea of understanding on a deeper level, Bo Johansson and Per Olov Svedner inform in *Examensarbetet i lärarutbildningen*. Within literary studies, textual analysis basically means the description and interpretation of literary works in order to relate them to the contexts to which they belong (64).

The method will be mainly qualitative, as the aim is to penetrate the texts in order to elucidate the contents as accurately as possible. For each text, a critical close-reading will be performed. Johansson and Svedner explain that this technique involves posing questions about the text itself and its contents. Some examples are: What is the conceivable purpose of the text? Can the author’s attitude be discerned? What has been included and what has been excluded? What can be found by reading between the lines? By asking why the text looks the way it does, the results that are obtained can be attributed to underlying causes, such as ideology, social demands and approach to knowledge. In addition, there will be a comparative study where differences and similarities between the textbooks are explained (Johansson and Svedner 65).

However, the analysis will also contain a quantitative aspect, namely the number of texts that are from or about a certain country in relation to the total number of texts of the book. The relationship between geographical areas and textual space can provide important information on the textbook authors’ priorities, for instance if a certain region is privileged or marginalised.

**Procedure**

The methodological procedure is based partly on the methods used by Ajagán-Lester and in the report *I enlighet med skolans värdegrund?* For each teaching media, there will first be a presentation of the authors’ intentions (if known) and a general overview of the layout of the book. Especially, the division of the book into chapters, themes and areas of study may have something to say about the intended focus. Subsequently, the quantitative aspect of representation and textual space will be roughly analysed. Two questions can here be raised:
Which parts of the English speaking world are represented and which are excluded? How much textual space are they allowed?

When studying the individual texts, the post-colonial theories discussed earlier will be applied, with focus on the concepts “English/english”, “difference”, “the Other”, “hybridity” and “diaspora”. The transgressing of stereotypes and other “good examples” will be particularly emphasised. Furthermore, it can be fruitful to combine a semiotic approach with discourse analysis centred on “ethnicity” and “nationality”\(^4\). The analysis will be roughly divided into three levels of social formation, each with its own area of interest:

1) *The individual: point of view.* From what ideological perspective is the text narrated? Which voices are allowed and which are silenced? Which are the subject positions?

2) *The group: ethnicity.* How is ethnicity represented? How is difference from “the Other” marked? Is language such a marker?

3) *Society: national identity.* What kind of national identity is represented? What boundaries are there for inclusion and exclusion? Is society conceived as a monolithic national culture, or are there hybrid and disporic cultures?

As Persson argues, when doing research on textbooks, the large volume of material and its heterogeneous character makes a close reading of the total material inconvenient. Therefore, he suggests a tactical and selective reading strategy (91). It is obviously not possible to comment on all texts, and therefore only the general trends of each book will be discussed, along with typical examples. Emphasis will be placed on the extremes: those texts that are characteristically “post-colonial” and those that contain obvious stereotypes.

In the concluding chapter the four books will be discussed together and then briefly compared with the Swedish ordinances. Finally, some implications of the use of textbooks in the English classroom will be discussed with respect to cultural issues.

**Analysis**

**Action!**

**General Presentation**

*Action!* was published in 2004 by Studentlitteratur and it is the most recent of the study kits selected for this study. This all-in-one book is recommended primarily for upper secondary

\(^4\) For a discussion about the two main branches of social constructivism and representation, semiotics and discourse based approaches, see Hall p. 62.
school course A and the corresponding adult education (Action, back cover). The textbook contains nine thematically structured chapters and one central section on 20th century history. Each chapter begins with an index and contains several short texts and a listening comprehension. All exercises are placed at the end of the book. There is also a “Resource Section” with advice on speaking and writing. The authors Eva Hedencrona, Karin Smed-Gerdin and Peter Watcyn-Jones inform that the texts cover fiction, newspaper texts and factual prose from “the English speaking world”. Moreover, they assert that the aim is “to inform about social conditions and to give an understanding of what cross-cultural communication is about” (Action 3, my trans.). In short, there seems to be an intention to comply with the cultural demands of the syllabus.

Geographical Areas and Textual Space

The classification of the texts in Action is rendered difficult because there are no presentations of the contributing authors. If the pupils do not recognise the name of the author or the magazine, they will probably not be able to place the text in its cultural context. In some cases, there are no references at all and it can then be supposed that the text is written by the authors of the textbook. However, it is clear that the majority of the 47 texts are either from or about Britain and the US. There is one text about South Africa and one about Australia. One story takes place in India and there are finally four internationally oriented texts, such as the section on 20th century world history. In sum, the focus is on the West, above all England and the US, even though it is interesting to notice that the material is not always restricted to English-speaking countries.

Cultural Representations of Ethnicity and Nationality

The general view of culture in Action is, to use Kramsch’s terminology, an unproblematic “mainstream culture” (Tornberg Språkididaktik 52). The point of view is often vaguely Western or Eurocentric and usually associated with white middle-class values. In many cases, but not all, society seems to consist of a homogenous national culture where ethnical tensions, problems and differences are strikingly absent. In the first chapter, for instance, a few young people on London’s South Bank are interviewed about their favourite word in English. All seven interviewees are white, although two of them are actually not British but tourists from Colorado. Is it only a coincidence or why is the fact that London is an ethnic melting pot totally ignored? Also other attempts to encourage the pupils to make cultural comparisons are usually limited to the Anglo-American cultural sphere. In the Resource Section, there is for
instance an exercise where the pupils can work with “typical” Swedish and British dishes (Action 149-150) and another where the differences between American and British English are pointed out (Action 171).

There is some emphasis on intercultural meetings. “Himalaya Love” by Kate Karko is the only text explicitly set in India, albeit from a Eurocentric point of view that displays the Other as “pure” and exotic. The narrator is a young woman from the London suburbs who escapes her sheltered middle-class life and travels to India in order to seek adventure. She falls in love with a Tibetan man who has come to India in order to learn English and finds that “[d]espite our different cultures, we discovered we were uncannily compatible” (Action 105-106). There is an illustration where the woman is blond and the man dark. In the text it is hinted that love can overcome cultural differences and one of the exercises is to discuss advantages and disadvantages of “mixed marriages” (Action 211). On the one hand, culture and identity seem to refer primarily to national entities, but on the other they are also to some extent viewed as processes, that is as something mouldable and changing.

The US and South Africa are described as multicultural nations with strong ethnic tensions. “Innocent on Death Row” is a factual text from The New York Times about Shareef Cousin, a seventeen-year-old African American who is sentenced to death and then found innocent. The text adopts a critical stance towards death penalty and gives Shareef, portrayed as a sad black boy, a voice to tell his version. In particular, racism is discussed as a serious problem in the American judicial system, because “critics say a combination of mistakes made in court, racial prejudice towards non-whites and poor legal defence is sending innocent people to death row” (Action 33). Since those convicted are usually poor African Americans, ethnicity and class are here articulated together. It can be noted that in the exercises the pupils are asked to discuss the part that race plays in the text (Action 158). Similarly, “South Africa Now” gives an account of the apartheid system and the subsequent democratic process. South Africa is recognised as a multi-ethnic society with several local languages apart from English. In addition, it is told that many blacks and “coloureds” have been forced to live in “shanty towns” (Action 65-66).

Albeit from a Eurocentric subject position, the factual section on the history of the 20th century raises several important post-colonial issues. European colonialism is explained as an effect of capitalism: “The industrial revolution in Europe created a need for colonies which could provide raw materials and new markets” (Action 55). Later on, it is told how Gandhi leads the struggle for independence in India and that the British Empire collapses (Action 56). Other central events are the division of Ireland in 1921, the Civil Rights Movement, the rise
and fall of apartheid, and the peace agreement in Belfast in 1998 (Action 55-58). The post-colonial historical focus is also evident in “The Aborigines – Australia’s Native People”, an informative text which stands up for the Aborigines and tries to do them full justice. When the Aboriginal social life is described it is pointed out that there were many different tribes and therefore many different traditions, which in fact is an acknowledgement of cultural pluralism. The colonisers, however, are simply treated as “Europeans” (Action 62-63). There is finally another text which also puts forward the skills and traditions of indigenous people, namely “Body Art”. Examples of tattoo and piercing from all over the world are given, thus opening up for intercultural comparisons both between other cultures and with the pupil’s own cultural background. However, the use of the phrase “our culture” and the division between “the West” and “non-Western cultures” show that the dichotomy we/the Other is at work here (Action 76-78). While the exotic Other is culturally diverse, the West is seen as one monolithic culture. In this way, inner unity and outer difference are created at the same time.

In conclusion, the authors’ cultural and international aims are partly fulfilled. There are, for example, ethnically marked texts and intercultural exercises. However, the focus is on Britain and the United States, the point of view is generally Western and multiculturalism is only ascribed to the typical cases of America, South Africa, Australia and India. As a matter of fact, imperialism is mainly dealt with in the past, and migration is limited to tourism and studies.

**Blueprint 1**

**General Presentation**

*Blueprint A*, published by Almqvist&Wiksell (Liber) in 2002, is an all-in-one book for English course A (step 5) for the study-oriented programs of upper secondary school and municipal adult education, the blurb informs. It is also stated that English is perceived as a tool rather than an end in itself (Blueprint, back cover). In the foreword, the authors Christer Lundfall, Ralf Nyström and Jeanette Clayton do not mention the word culture (Blueprint, introduction). The textbook is thematically divided into nine chapters with both fictional and factual texts. Each text is followed by basic questions (“Reading & Reacting”), deeper and more complicated questions (“Reflect & Share”) and vocabulary practice (“Word Work”). The chapters end with a section of oral and written proficiency and most of them contain a listening comprehension.
Geographical Areas and Textual Space

In *Blueprint*, the focus is mainly on the US. Fourteen of the 33 texts are either primarily set in the US, written by an American author or published in an American newspaper or magazine. This can be compared to the six texts about Britain and the two about Ireland. In addition, there is one text about Vanuatu, in which New Zealand is also referred to. Canada is mentioned incidentally in the text about dog teams. For the rest of the material the author is unknown or it has not been possible to determine the setting or the origin. It has to be noted that Australia, Africa, Asia and the West Indies are totally absent.

Cultural Representations of Ethnicity and Nationality

In many of the texts in *Blueprint* ethnic issues seem to be unproblematic and of secondary importance. There are some striking exceptions that will be discussed later, but to a great extent the view of culture is national and ethnically homogenous. It can be noted that some texts are written in English, like for instance Roddy Doyle’s “He’s a Big Bastard”. However, other sections come close to Kramsch’s mainstream culture, such as the first chapter, which deals with American summer camps. All three texts are about boys from a more or less affluent white middle-class. The photo that displays a group of white male scouts in a bus can be seen as representative of this idealised and simplified view of America (*Blueprint* 10). Not until the listening comprehension (“A Summer Camp with a Difference”) at the end of the section is it hinted that not all Americans share the same socio-cultural background. To focus on mainstream culture in the texts and then place the cultural and ethnical conflicts in the listening comprehension can be seen as symptomatic of the priority given by the authors.

Throughout *Blueprint* there is a clearly perceivable aim to enhance the pupil’s ability to read and think critically, even about post-colonial issues. “Bungee Jump – A Ritual or an Adventure?” is an anonymous article about the legal rights of bungee jumping. The islanders of Vanuatu claim that their traditional vine-jumping was copied by the West in order to make a profit. In the text, the journalist’s ethnocentrism is obvious. For instance, he only lets the New Zealand and the English parts comment on the matter. In addition, there are several hierarchical dichotomies based on Western/indigenous, such as “primitive ritual”/”calculated sport” (*Blueprint* 48-49). The biased attitude is explained and discussed in the exercises, where the pupils are asked to replace the negative expressions referring to the Vanuatu people with positive ones (*Blueprint* 50-51). Is the article written by the textbook authors themselves in order to show an apparently tendentious text?
The theme of terrorism is closely related to ethnicity, nationality and culture. The chapter titled “Taken Hostage” contains Robert Cormier’s “Lollipops and Guns”, a fictional story about two young and dark-skinned men from a distant land “gobbled up and occupied – by others” (Blueprint 87). The boys hijack a school bus in the countryside in Massachusetts and take hostages. Miro, seventeen, is going to “justify his existence” and revenge the death of his brother who passed away “before fulfilling his promise” (Blueprint 86). Miro frequently compares America with his home country:

American girls: he could not become accustomed to their blunt sexuality, the clinging jeans, the tight sweaters, the frankness of their faces holding few secrets. In his homeland, sexuality was implied, hinted at, not exactly concealed but delicately veiled. He had been in the United States for almost three years and was still both fascinated and repelled by so much of what he saw. So much that was brazen, hectic, loud, raw, and course. (Blueprint 88)

Miro cannot simply understand the emancipated Western woman. Speaking to the blond girl who happens to drive the bus that day, he distances himself from the American identity by using the pronoun “your”. As a result, the girl starts reflecting upon cultural differences as well: “She noted the use of your meaning not mine. She wondered about his nationality” (Blueprint 92). In this way, the text is full of cross-cultural comparisons based on the dichotomy East/West. In the exercises, the pupils are requested to reflect on the differences in the view of women in the two cultures and think about the implications (Blueprint 96). Possibly, this could enhance the students’ intercultural understanding.

The United States is the setting for the theme of racism as well. The chapter “Wages of Hate” begins with a conspicuous family photo, where the father instructs an infant how to handle a gun, while the mother is watching smilingly. In the introduction, America is recognised as a multicultural society with diasporic identities and racial tensions that result from colonialism (Blueprint 179). The first text, “Asking the Wrong Questions”, is an adaptation of the screenplay to the movie American History X, which is reviewed at the end of the book. It is the story of two white Californian brothers who become involved in a white supremacy movement. In the dialogues, the racist rhetoric of the neo-Nazis is revealed when they discuss topics such as urban riots and the Rodney King case. The black point of view is provided by the brothers’ history teacher, who talks about African Americans as “my people” in opposition to “white people” (Blueprint 183). Thus, national identity is the hybridised juxtaposition of American and Black African, American and White European. Besides, the teacher, who has two PhDs and is admired by the brothers, is a central character that escapes the stereotypical “token black” (Blueprint 183-184). In Reflect & Share the pupils are told to make intercultural comparisons between the film and the situation in Sweden and Europe. In
particular, they are encouraged to consider the introduction of affirmative action in order to make it easier for immigrants to get a job (Blueprint 185).

The second text, John Grisham’s “I Owe It to My People”, focuses on the black victim of white racism and contains some African American english from the Southern States. Here, the black talk about “my people” is contrasted with the white Southerner’s view of his ethnic group as a “family” in need of protection from the Other (Blueprint 189-190). Similarly, in the introduction to the listening comprehension it is explained that it is in the metropolitan centres and in the South where the dichotomy black/white is still valid, while elsewhere “the color lines are being redrawn [...] all nuances of brown and yellow and red form the face of future United States” (Blueprint 193). In other words, it is recognised that just like ethnicity, race is a social construct, formed in processes of hybridisation and “diaspora-ization”. The chapter ends with Writing & Speaking. Here the pupils are encouraged to arrange a talk show about discrimination on the labour market, racial segregation or affirmative action. Some ideas are given, such as the difficulty for members of minority groups to enter labour market, and the preservation of cultural traditions versus assimilation. One exercise is a team debate for and against affirmative action, and another the writing of an argumentative essay on racism, immigration or integration (Blueprint 194-196). These assignments are likely to improve the pupils’ intercultural understanding and their solidarity with other people.

In short, with its entire focus on Europe and America, Blueprint leaves out important parts of the English speaking world. The themes of terrorism and racism are in stark contrast to the ethnically homogenous national cultures of other chapters and give the book a somewhat divided impression. However, the attempt to encourage critical reflection is a common feature, there are several exercises that deal with difficult ethnic and intercultural issues and in some cases the local englishes find a proper voice.

**Real Time 1**

**General Presentation**

Real Time 1 was published in 2002 by Gleerups. It is an all-in-one book intended for the first year of upper secondary school and municipal adult education (Real Time, back cover). According to the authors Anthony Cutler and Christer Johansson, the Real Time-series contains “quality stories” and “thought-provoking texts”, which range from suspense to real-life adventures, comedy and journalism (Real Time, 3, my trans.). It can be noticed that the authors do not mention anything about culture.
The contents are divided into 20 chapters, each consisting of one or several main stories, four of them longer than the others and some of them accompanied by a poem or an informative text. All chapters also contain a section with exercises such as questions to the text, tasks to enhance the pupils’ oral and written proficiency and listening comprehensions. In the teacher’s guide there are, amongst other things, notes on the contributing authors and suggestions for project work on sports, animals, Australia and Native Americans.

**Geographical Areas and Textual Space**

In *Real Time* there is a clear predominance of Britain and the US with respect to authors and settings. Ten out of 33 texts are either from or about the US and eight from or about Britain. Interestingly, among the British texts Wales and Scotland are presented separately: Scotland has three texts and Wales one. Despite the Anglo-American focus, a number of nations are in fact represented in *Real Time*. There are also two texts about Australia, two from and/or about South Africa, one by an Irish author and one which takes place mostly in Canada. The “inner circle”, the countries where English is a first language, is thus well covered, with the exception of New Zealand and Northern Ireland. However, the “outer circle”, the countries where English is a second language and often also an official language, is only represented by South Africa (Svartvik 9). Culturally and economically important nations such as India are marked by their absence. For a few texts, no author is given and in others there are no clear markers of nationality. Possibly, the factual texts are written by Cutler and Johansson themselves.

**Cultural Representations of Ethnicity and Nationality**

The dominant trend in *Real Time* is the unproblematic attitude towards issues of ethnicity and nationality. In many of the texts society is represented as a monolithic national culture, the perspective is diffusely Western, the Other is marked by its absence and language is more English than English. Conflicts and differences are generally toned down and values are often characteristically middle-class, which creates a “mainstream culture”. The overall impression is that the authors have endeavoured to find sensational and exciting stories that might catch the attention of young readers, rather than texts that could inspire to cultural comparisons or discussions about identity. Examples of this can be found in the chapter on animals, “A Hungry Python and an Intelligent Parrot”, or in “Guardian Angel”, the supposedly true story about an emergency landing. However, there are exceptions and they will be covered below. Sometimes markers of nationality are missing, like in “Uneven Ground” by Michael Carroll,
the only Irish author in the book (*Real Time* 92-99). In another text, “It’ll Never Last” by Anthony Childs, it is explicitly stated that cultures and ethnicities are viewed as national. In a letter to her nephews and nieces an elderly lady tells the story of how an English airman fell in love with a Canadian country girl during the Second World War. Describing the foreigners, the aunt writes that “Bill was a dark, gentle, and gravelly-voiced Scot. Hugh was quite the reverse – tall, blond, a little shy, and *very* English” (*Real Time* 86). Here, both personality and biological appearance seem to be governed by nationality. Besides, it is implied that national essences exist, so that one can be more or less English.

It is highly remarkable that it is nowhere recognised that Britain today is a multicultural society characterised by diasporic and hybrid cultural identities. In one text, however, it is observed that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Marilyn Sachs’ “Lessons” is a story about Charlotte who is employed as an English teacher by the kind Mr. Alexander, owner of a pastry shop. Mr. Alexander has worked hard all his life to support his family, first in Greece and then in his new country. Now he needs a teacher, “an American girl”, in order to “talk better, not to sound like all those new foreigners who just came over” (*Real Time* 138-139). The use of “American” here is symptomatic of the hierarchical division of “new” foreigners, “old” immigrants and “Americans”. The Alexanders’ diasporic identification with Greece is stronger than the American identity from which they are excluded. Thus, there is an image of America as being composed of a dominant Anglo-American culture coexisting with separate diasporic cultures.

There are two texts about native populations in America, one Native American “legend” by Robert D. San Souci, who is “fascinated by classic folk tales from different cultures” (*Real Time 1 For Teachers* 59), and one Inuit tale from Alaska written by the New Yorker Louis Untermeyer. What characterises them both is that they are narrated from the perspective of the Western outsider and therefore the native peoples are inevitably represented as the Other. “The Eskimo Widow” begins by telling the reader that “the Eskimos have a legend they tell when the long winter nights are the worst”. Also “The Hunter in the Haunted Forest” has a third person narrator, but here there is one example of “glossing”, the translation of words written in a local language, which “foregrounds the continual reality of cultural distance” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 60). In the text, “wasna” is explained as “grease mixed with pounded buffalo meat and wild cherry” (*Real Time* 166). Both texts present an image of the Other as exotic and different from “us”, but nevertheless their rich mythologies provide a starting point for comparison between other cultures and the pupil’s own background.
Another trend in *Real Time* is that the factual texts and exercises give the impression of being an attempt to complement the often monolithic view of culture of the fiction. In the case of the Native-American ghost story, the exercises illuminate the colonial past. “The Eskimo Widow” is followed by a translation exercise with facts about the Inuit and another informing about the Sami. Similarly, the text about an Australian single-handed (white) yachtsman is followed by an informative text where the Aborigines are recognised as natives who lived in harmony with their environment and who suffered severely from the European colonisation. Also, the ethnically neutral text about American baseball is complemented with a historical account where the racist past is recognised. There is a one-page photo of a black man swinging his bat, titled “Jackie Robinson Changed America”. Albeit a positive image, it is close to the stereotypical image of the black and powerful athlete who is supposed to have succeeded because of his body, not his mind.

There is one example of post-colonial literature: “Somebody Has to Be First” by the South African Beverley Naidoo. The story, set in 1995, is narrated from the ideological perspective of a black African girl who is the first black pupil in a formerly whites-only school. In the pre-text, it is explicitly stated that South Africa is a nation containing many ethnic groups, and the text is clearly focused on the harsh racist climate that has come to characterise society even after the formal demise of apartheid. The story is followed by a two-page photo of a (white) surfer on a beach where there is a sign telling “for white persons only”. The caption asserts that such signs are now forbidden. There is also a factual text about South Africa, in which it is affirmed that the Bantu peoples were the first habitants. The British and Dutch colonisation, the apartheid system and the democracy work of Mandela are treated in the text, but the post-colonial text is in deep contrast to the illustration of a safari jeep where the passenger is a blond girl and the driver a black man. The image inevitably carries colonial connotations: the black native working for the white tourist, offering the most “exotic” of his home country.

In sum, *Real Time* contains some ethnic stereotypes, but they are generally counterbalanced by the exercises and factual texts that display a clear anti-Eurocentric post-colonial orientation. However, in many chapters culture is perceived as an unproblematic and diffuse national “mainstream culture” and there are few attempts to fully recognise the pluralism that characterises the English speaking world.
**Short Cuts 1**

**General Presentation**

*Short Cuts 1* is a teaching media for the A-course (step 5) from Bonnier Utbildning, written by Jörgen Gustafsson and Lennart Peterson and published in 2001. According to the blurb, it is recommended especially for of the study-oriented programs of upper secondary school and municipal adult education. The textbook contains ten chapters. There is one introductory chapter, five comprehensive themes, two short sections concentrated on debates and two about music, poetry and art. Each chapter contains several fictional or non-fictional texts, a number of different exercises and listening comprehensions.

In the teacher’s guide the authors state that they have tried to satisfy the demands of the syllabus from 2000 with respect to “cultural orientation” and “multicultural aspects”. They also claim that the texts have been collected from a large part of the English speaking world, and that some of them are written by “second-generation immigrants” in Britain and the US. It is also asserted that many exercises and listening comprehensions give voice to people from different parts of the world and with different backgrounds. Besides, cultural differences are said to be dealt with in oral and written assignments and the international character of English is covered in the individual exercises labelled “Research” and “Project” (*Short Cuts 1 Teacher’s Guide* 11). It is obvious that the authors have emphasized the use of culture in language teaching and that they adopt a post-colonial approach. The fact that the authors have placed a map of the English-speaking world on the inside of the front cover sets a good example. Interestingly, the pictures are claimed to have been selected not only to illustrate the texts but also to supplement them (*Short Cuts 3*).

**Geographical Areas and Textual Space**

The US and Britain are the most well represented nations in *Short Cuts 1*. Out of 30 texts, eleven and seven texts respectively are either written by an author from these countries or mainly set there. Two of these writers are second-generation immigrants. There are also two texts by Irish authors, one poem from Wales and one from Scotland. Australia is represented with one text and South Africa one. Finally, there are two texts that take place in India, one of which is written by an Indian author. In a few cases, no author is given and there are no geographical markers. In short, even though the focus is on the “inner circle”, India is relatively well-represented and a few diasporic writers are included.
Cultural Representations of Ethnicity and Nationality

The general impression of *Short Cuts* is that it is culturally diversified. Albeit there is no theme that deals explicitly with topics of ethnicity and nationality, cultural issues can be found in many of the chapters and these will soon be discussed. Not only in the texts but also in the listening comprehensions and the exercises culture is problemised. Interestingly, many photos illustrate a multi-faceted English-speaking world. The chapter “Young Voices”, for example, begins with a collage of boys and girls of different ethnicities and nationalities and the pupils are asked to speculate about their backgrounds (*Short Cuts* 106-107). Less successful is it perhaps to start the section on drugs with a photo of two African Americans around a campfire in a rough urban area (*Short Cuts* 140). Whereas the first illustration represents a positive view of cultural variety, the second merely contributes to the stereotype of black criminals. Similarly, the only text about South Africa, an article about the Kruger Park, is illustrated by a photo of a safari jeep where the driver is black and the tourists are white. Some comments on South Africa’s past would not be amiss. Furthermore, there are a few clear examples of “mainstream culture”, such as “When the Blond Bombshell drops”, a light article by a conservative middle-class writer who disapproves of his son dying his hair. However, in the exercises the pupils are asked to reflect over the writer’s social background.

A post-colonial approach can be applied also within Europe. It is notable that the Welsh and the Scottish poets are not presented as British. Furthermore, Ireland is represented twice: “Geometry Lesson”, an excerpt from Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes* and Maeve Binchy’s “The Glass Lake”. In both stories, the difference from Britain is marked mainly by the names of people and places, but in the first it is also characterised by poverty and religion. However, in both texts the language is more English than English (*Short Cuts* 88-93, 191-195). The Irish struggle against the British rule is briefly exemplified in the Research section (*Short Cuts* 98).

In *Short Cuts* there is an obvious focus on the experiences of migration to the West. “My Near-Death Experience” by Meera Syal, born in Britain to Indian parents, is set in England in the 1960s. The nine-year-old protagonist and narrator is the daughter of the only Indian family in the village. The discourse is centred on the dichotomy we/them, where Meena identifies with an Indian diasporic identity in opposition to “English people”, the Other. Punjabi is “our native language”, but in fact Meena does not understand it and her mother sees it as her duty to show that they can “dress in tasteful silks and speak English without an accent”. When the mother meets other Indian women who wear the traditional colourful clothing, “Mama would acknowledge them with a respectful nod and then turn away
and shake her head” (Short Cuts 63-64). It is easy to see that despite the young narrator’s clear-cut ethnic division, the family’s identity has actually already undergone a process of assimilation and become hybridised. In the exercises, the students are asked to discuss “good manners” in different countries and do research on India and Pakistan (Short Cuts 69-70). Also “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”, an article about future life for young people, gives voice to second-generation immigrants in England, in this case two girls with African and Caribbean-born parents (Short Cuts 126-131). The text by Chinese-American Amy Tan, “The Chess Player”, is set in San Francisco’s Chinatown, but does otherwise not discuss ethnicity. However, the readers are encouraged to reflect on cultural differences in parental expectations (Short Cuts 79) and the listening comprehension highlights American immigration (87). The Australian text “Being a Girl” by Jean Holkner has a Jewish protagonist and is thus also concerned with minorities and being “different” (Short Cuts 109-114).

There are several texts that discuss American culture and ethnicity. “The Road to Oregon” is a factual text about the “pioneers” who in the 19th century moved west. It deals with issues of place and displacement, but from a Western perspective where Native Americans are the Other. The historical discourse is clearly colonial and ethnocentric: an American “explorer” “discovered” the river that he named Columbia, early missionaries wanted to “bring Christianity to the Indians” and the pioneers used weapons “for protection against the Indians” (Short Cuts 32-33). However, in the exercises the pupils are asked about the first habitants and they are told to look for evidence that the text is “pro-American” (Short Cuts 36). One of the projects can also be labelled post-colonial:

Who do you think was to blame for what happened between the Indians and the settlers? Was it ‘aggressive savages’ as the press at the time stated or is there more to the story? What is the situation for the Indians who still live in Oregon (or elsewhere in the US) today? (Short Cuts 40)

The life of Native Americans is described in “Indian Camp”, an excerpt from In Our Time by Ernest Hemingway. Albeit the point of view is of the Western “outsider”, the situation of the Native Americans is characterised by harsh social conditions. There are also plenty of indigenous expressions, which are practised in a vocabulary exercise (Short Cuts 71-77).

India is represented from a Western as well as an Eastern perspective. “East Meets West” by William Sutcliff is described as a satire on “the attitudes and prejudices of Western ‘travellers’ towards India” (Short Cuts 20). Indeed, the young English narrator depicts the locals in a biased way, but his reliability is questioned in the assignments, which include the writing of a newspaper article that presents the story from an Indian point of view (Short Cuts 26, 29). Interestingly, the illustrations reinforce the sense of “otherness” and one caption says:
“India today – a melting pot of traditional and modern lifestyles” (Short Cuts 23). The other text, “Stench of Kerosene” by Anita Pritam, provides deeper insights in Indian traditions. This post-colonial text about amorous love and arranged marriages displays cultural differences within the nation, especially in terms of the dichotomy modern/traditional (Short Cuts 149-154). Moreover, the language contains some untranslated words, such as “dupatta”, which gives the text a “sense of cultural distinctiveness” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 63). There is one exercise where the pupils are asked to discuss if the story could happen in Sweden and one about the advantages and disadvantages of cross-cultural marriages. The students are also encouraged to search for information on India and there is one task of dramatisation that involves a reworking of the story for Swedish conditions (Short Cuts 157-158). In this way, both texts about India provide the students with the opportunity to enhance their intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, Short Cuts contains a great cultural variety ranging from mainstream culture to post-colonial literature. An obvious effort has been made to find multicultural illustrations and intercultural exercises. The multi-ethnic reality of Britain and the United States is recognised and there are varieties of English, but historical facts about colonialism are seldom provided.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to examine if English textbooks offer a cultural perspective of the English-speaking world in accordance with Swedish ordinances and research findings. The central research question was: How is the English-speaking world culturally represented in English textbooks for Swedish upper secondary school course A in terms of ethnicity and national identity? It was then divided into four sub-questions about the ideological point of view, the representation of ethnicity and national identity and how these issues correspond to the Curriculum and the Syllabus. My hypothesis was that the schoolbooks do not live up to the demands and that they present a Western point of view with monolithic national cultures and stereotyped images of the Other. Four textbooks from 2000 or later were chosen: Action!, Blueprint A, Short Cuts 1 and Real Time 1. The analysis was carried out within the framework of post-colonial theory. I will now discuss the results of the analyses of the four books and compare with the Curriculum and the Syllabus.

The initial quantitative survey of the representation of geographical areas suffered from the lack of information about the origin of the texts. In the teacher’s guides to Real Time and Short Cuts many of the contributing authors are presented, but the question is why the pupils
are not given this information directly. Why are the writers’ backgrounds made invisible? Do the textbook authors not consider the cultural context important? In any case, the quantitative aspects should be used as an approximate guideline and not a definitive measure. However, the general trend is clear. In all four books the US is the most common country both with respect to authors and settings, closely followed by Britain. The finding partly contradicts Gagnestam’s previously cited study, where she asserts that English teaching in upper secondary school mainly concerns England/Britain. It might be the case that many teachers are still subject to value hierarchies that give prominence to the culture of the former imperial centre and that they therefore tend to emphasise England in their teaching, for instance by choosing to work primarily with the English texts of the teaching media. However, I am more inclined to believe that America is actually taking over the central position of English teaching in Sweden, not least because of the American dominance of media and popular culture. Teachers as well as textbook authors are likely to be influenced by today’s enormous supply of American writing, film and music.

Another notable aspect of the geographical representation is that the authors of *Real Time* and *Short Cuts* have chosen to present Scotland and Wales separately, which could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the regional variations within Britain. All of the books except *Action* include one of two Irish authors, but it is remarkable that there is no text set in Northern Ireland, an area of conflict that has been the scenery for much juvenile literature. Svartvik’s “inner circle” (9) is obviously well-covered, but there are two striking exceptions: New Zealand and Canada. However, the “outer circle” (Svartvik 9) is marginalised, as it is mainly restricted to South Africa and India. How can a great power such as India be excluded from *Blueprint* and *Real Time*? In sum, there still seems to be a geographical canon consisting of Britain and the US and, to a lesser extent, Ireland, Australia and South Africa.

The predominating ideological point of view is diffusely Western or Eurocentric in the four textbooks, however not biased in a way that contributes to stereotyping. Nowadays authors and publishers seem to be aware of the dangers of racism and include only material that can be regarded as “politically correct”. Nevertheless, the way of giving precedence to the Western point of view can be interpreted as a symptom of an implicit and deeply-rooted ethnocentrism. Post-colonial critics have rightly indicated the importance of acknowledging the quantity and quality of post-colonial literatures in English (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 191). However, non-Western post-colonial fiction narrated from a local perspective is rare in the textbooks. Indeed, there seems to be some sort of resistance towards the inclusion of texts that are narrated from the point of view of the post-colonial subject. Nevertheless, there are a
couple of striking exceptions, such as the stories by Beverley Naidoo in *Real Time* and Amrita Pritam in *Short Cuts*. It can also be noted that local varieties of English are sparse, and it can only be speculated if it is because they are thought of as difficult or because the standard code is considered superior. Besides, a curious tendency in *Action* and *Real Time* is to counterpoise the Western point of view of some of the main texts with post-colonial historical accounts possibly written by the textbook authors themselves. The authors are obviously aware of post-colonial issues concerning history and politics, but for some reason post-colonial fiction is conspicuous by its absence. One thing is to describe the characteristics of the apartheid system by providing historical facts and another to present a personal account from someone who has experienced it.

A general feature is that ethnicity tends to be viewed as unproblematic. In fact, ethnically homogenous populations often seem to be taken for granted and racial tensions are sometimes smoothed over or neglected. This is especially true for Europe, as Meera Syal’s story in *Short Cuts* is the only one where it is explicitly stated that Britain is multi-ethnic. In a way, the textbook authors seem to find it easier to take up ethnic issues if they are distant in time and place. Indeed, the US is generally acknowledged as multi-ethnic, as all books include texts about African Americans and/or Native Americans. With the exception of *Blueprint* each book also contains a few multi-ethnic texts about Australia (the aborigines), South Africa (apartheid) and/or India. It can be noted that these texts tend to focus more on the historical conditions of the European colonisation, such as slave trade and the extinction of indigenous peoples, than on the effects of globalisation and contemporary migration. However, *Blueprint* dedicates one theme to the problem of racial prejudice towards the African-American population and even encourages the pupils to compare with xenophobia in Sweden. Finally, the multi-ethnic illustrations in *Short Cuts* can be seen as a conscious attempt to create positive images that may trigger an animated debate about ethnicity and nationality.

Tornberg’s national “mainstream culture” still seems to be frequent in English textbooks. Whilst the importance of national variety seems to have been observed by the textbook authors, at least to some extent, the monolithic view of culture is in many cases not questioned. It has to be remembered that geographical diversity is only one aspect of culture in language teaching, because there can be a rich cultural diversity also within the borders of a nation. However, recent postcolonial characteristics such as hybridity and the diaspora are not prominent in the textbooks analysed. Often there is no Other to mark difference or create conflict in the middle-class societies depicted. Nevertheless, as shown in the analysis, there
are several important exceptions. For instance, the texts about second-generation immigrants not only open up for hybridised and disasporic cultural identities that many pupils can identify with, but the texts may also expose hierarchies of national identification. As in the Marilyn Sachs’ story in *Real Time*, where there are “new immigrants”, “old immigrants” and “Americans”. However, it is only *Short Cuts* that gives a proper voice to second-generation immigrants and describes the experiences of displacement from their point of view.

A final comparison between the four textbooks reveals both similarities and differences. *Blueprint* has the most limited selection of material, but at the same time also the most advanced texts. Furthermore, themes and assignments explore ethnic differences in depth and display culture as an area of conflict. *Real Time* is the opposite. Albeit the selection of texts is geographically varied, the dominating view of culture is simplistic and post-colonial topics are with few exceptions relegated to exercises and factual texts. *Action* can be placed somewhere in between and is primarily distinguished by its historical focus. *Short Cuts* is the only book where serious attention to post-colonial literatures is paid. It should also be noticed that it is the only one that describes India from a local perspective and narrates the experiences of second-generation immigrants in Britain.

The final step is to compare the textbooks with the Swedish ordinances. Do the books fulfil the demands of the *Curriculum* and the *Syllabus*? In terms of geographical diversity, the authors of *Blueprint* seem not to have responded to the “broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world” of the *Syllabus*. *Action* offers slightly better diversity, whilst *Short Cuts* and *Real Time* are relatively varied. Furthermore, in one way or the other, all four books encourage intercultural work and provide information on “ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions” in at least a few English-speaking areas. However, to “develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures” (*Syllabus*), or even create “international solidarity”, as it is stated in the *Curriculum* (6), is a more challenging task. *Short Cuts* and *Blueprint* could possibly comply with this if the “cultural” texts are dealt with in depth.

In conclusion, the initial hypothesis can be partly refuted. There are no biased ethnic stereotypes that are not answered, and in none of the books the mainstream culture is without exception. All four contain intercultural comparisons and the historical accounts usually display a balanced post-colonial orientation. It is obvious that the textbook authors to some extent have responded to the “cultural turn” of the ordinances. However, “problematic” cultural issues are sometimes relegated to less central positions such as listening comprehensions and exercises, or packed into a separate theme or chapter, as if the authors
have taken the easy way out to escape critique. The main concern with Blueprint is above all the poor geographical and cultural variety, whereas Action and especially Real Time lack the will to problemise. It is Short Cuts that proves to be the most suitable starting point for fruitful cultural work in the language classroom thanks to its emphasis on post-colonial writing. In order to open up for the world around one has to let the world in. The best way to create a profound sense of solidarity with people around us and at the same time form our own cultural identity is to see the world through someone else’s eyes. Post-colonial literatures offer this possibility if worked with properly and with English as a world language they are within easier reach than ever. It is here, I believe, that post-colonial literatures can be an important contribution to language teaching.

**Teaching Implications**

The actual use of textbooks is of crucial importance to language teaching. It goes without saying that the way in which the teacher and the pupils finally choose to work with the teaching media will determine the result to a great extent. Nonetheless, the contents of the textbooks often serve as a guide for the activities in the classroom. For instance, it can be supposed that the thematic division of the books may determine which areas to focus on during the year. Above all, the assignments suggest possible ways to work with the texts. There are a few central questions that need to be posed here: What qualifies a text for use? How to work with it in compliance with Swedish ordinances? What is useful in the textbooks and what else is needed?

In the language classroom, the relevance of a text depends on several factors. Among the textbooks in this study, linguistic criteria seem to have dominated the process of selection, normally with the additional demand that the text be interesting and informative. What is new in language teaching is the increasing emphasis on cultural aspects, which also poses new requirements on the choice of texts. However, as it has already been shown, surprisingly many texts are culturally unmarked or characterised by a national mainstream culture. Furthermore, since facts about the writers’ background are often absent, the textbook authors generally seem to pay little regard to situating the texts in their cultural contexts. In consequence, it is up to the teacher to provide the students with a cultural framework, either by using information from the teacher’s guide, or by doing research on her own. From a post-colonial perspective, I argue that culture should be a central criterion for the selection of texts. If the pupils are expected to grasp issues of ethnicity and nationality in the English-speaking
world, they have to encounter contextualised and culturally marked texts. In the selection of school texts, the positive values of cultural and ethnic diversity should be fully acknowledged.

However, the implementation of the new view of culture that is advocated by Tornberg and Gagnestam is rendered difficult by the fact that the Swedish ordinances are highly problematic. The guidelines of the *Curriculum* and the *Syllabus* are in many ways obscure and contradictory. Besides, it can be argued that they do not fully reflect today’s society. For instance, the emphasis on cultural comparisons in the *Syllabus* seems to presuppose the existence of monolithic cultures, which is incompatible with the hybridised and diasporic identities of many second-generation immigrant pupils. The ordinances seem to be in need of a thorough revision in order to make them more in agreement with recent research. For the meantime, the discrepancy between ordinances and reality place increasing demands on the teacher.

All four textbooks offer possibilities for important cultural work in accordance with the ordinances. As shown, there are at least a few culturally useful fictional texts in each book and also facts about ways of living and cultural traditions in some English-speaking areas. In particular, the post-colonial historical explanations are likely to develop a deeper understanding of the world around. Also the multi-ethnic illustrations in *Short Cuts* serve as a good example. Moreover, it is obvious that there is a clear intention to develop the pupils’ intercultural competence in compliance with the *Syllabus*. Sometimes the pupils are asked to compare national cultures and sometimes the comparisons are carried out on a personal level. It can be noted that *Short Cuts* and *Blueprint* contain more complex and demanding cultural assignments than the other two. For example, in *Short Cuts* the pupils can do “post-colonial” research on areas such as the history of Ireland and the situation of the Native Americans. *Blueprint* goes further and actively promotes the development of critical reading skills, which is of crucial importance in today’s information society.

Nevertheless, this study has also displayed serious shortcomings in English textbooks. Above all, it is a question of lack: more culturally marked material is needed and it has to be better used. Cultural issues should not be tucked into less central sections, but pervade the entire book. First, the geographical “canon” has to be abolished in favour of the expanding English-speaking world. Marginalised areas such as India, Northern Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and the Caribbean also deserve attention. Even if it is impossible to cover every country in a single volume, it is crucial to make the pupils aware of the fact that there are other English-speaking cultures than Britain and the US and open for a post-colonial worldview. Post-colonial fiction can help creating a sense of international solidarity with people
from other parts of the world. Second, the monolithic view of culture needs to be abandoned in favour of pluralism. Especially, hybridised and diasporic identities are seldom dealt with in the textbooks, despite the cultural diversity in Swedish classrooms. The greatest challenge for the authors will be to connect with young people’s experiences of migration and cultural meetings. The situation of the African Americans in the US is a common feature in the books, but the next step will be to include other minority groups as well. Recently, a number of young and prominent British authors of foreign origin, most notably Zadie Smith and Bali Rai, have made a name for themselves with fiction that gives voice to the experiences of second-generation immigrants. This writing in the diaspora has the ability to highlight processes of place and displacement and the production of hybridised identities. It can therefore contribute to deeper understanding of foreign cultures and a tolerant attitude towards minorities. Finally, in order to facilitate Tornberg’s “encounter in an open landscape”, more assignments are needed where pupils can make cultural comparisons on an individual level. Pupils should not only be given the possibility learn about foreign people’s experiences, but also discuss and compare them with their own and their fellow students’ experiences. It may not be possible to gain complete understanding of other cultures, but I believe it is important to teach the value of respect nonetheless. Cultural differences do not necessary have to be reconciled, but as long as they do not violate any human rights they deserve all respect.

In conclusion, language teaching in Swedish school is brought up against great challenges. The ongoing revision of teaching media that started with feminist attention to equality in school texts is being extended to cover not only an active resistance against xenophobia and racial prejudice but also an acknowledgement of the positive values of cultural diversity and hybridity. Recent fields of social criticism such as post-colonialism offer new radical ways of dealing with cultural and ethnic issues. Language teaching has a key position in school because of its ability to open up for the world around. As Tornberg has suggested, it is time for a rethink of the way culture is dealt with in the language classroom. The first step will be to update the ordinances and the schoolbooks.
Works Cited

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