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A Native Speaker Norm Approach vs. an
Intercultural Approach in the English K-3
Classroom in Sweden

Ett Normativt Förhållningssätt vs. ett Interkulturellt
Förhållningssätt i det Engelska F-3 Klassrummet i Sverige

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Preface

We have been equally involved in the working process during this degree project. At times, we focused on different parts of the Introduction as well as the Previous Research and Conclusion sections; however, all content in this paper have been read through and agreed on by both parts. The remaining parts of the study such as the Results, Discussion, Method, References, as well as the interviews and transcribing, have been carried out in full cooperation.

We hereby state our equal contribution to this degree project.

Lovisa Oldaeus and Linn Strömbäck
Abstract

In a world that is becoming more cosmopolitan, pedagogical approaches, particularly those that focus on diversity of cultures, have become paramount. As a result, this study attempts to gain insight into what pedagogical approaches K-3 teachers in Sweden use during their English lessons, and whether these approaches are more native speaker or interculturally focused and why that is. Initially, this degree project presents an overview of previous research made on the Native Speaker norm approach and the Intercultural approach. The findings show that the Native Speaker norm approach is more commonly used than the Intercultural approach. However, as English is a language used worldwide, the teaching of it should include content relatable to non-native speakers as well. Nevertheless, the Intercultural approach is relatively new and teachers still need the training and the tools to implement it. This paper builds on the content from interviews of three K-3 teachers and one assisting principal in different parts of Sweden. The main conclusions of this study are that (I) the teachers predominantly use a Native Speaker norm approach due to tradition; (II) the teachers lack training and knowledge of how to implement an Intercultural approach and, consequently, they do not know how to use it; (III) the teaching materials provided by the schools have an impact on what approach the teachers use; (IV) the teachers’ English teaching leaves their pupils struggling in coming to terms with their own identity in a global context, as well as appreciating norms and English varieties other than that of Standard English.

Keywords: Native Speaker norm approach, Intercultural approach, English teaching, internationalisation, teaching materials, diversity and tolerance.
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1. Introduction

During our field training practice in grades K-3, we have noticed that English lessons in Sweden still rely heavily on teaching materials using a Native Speaker norm approach. This is an approach which focuses on the norms and traditions of countries which use English as their native language, such as the United Kingdom and America, introducing little to no cultural diversity overall. However, our teacher training at Malmö Högskola has stressed the importance of moving away from such a Native Speaker (NS) ideal. During lectures, our teachers have emphasized the importance of creating a tolerant and diverse English classroom by using an Intercultural approach as opposed to an NS approach. The Swedish Board of Education (SBE) (2012) defines interculturality as the ability to reflect on one’s own culture in relation to other cultures. Furthermore, the SBE (2012) pinpoints interculturality as a key competence in modern society, where Sweden is not only becoming more cosmopolitan, but is gaining more global contacts overall. With this in mind, the usage of a Native Speaker norm approach in the Swedish English K-3 classroom can be problematized.

Globally, English is often taught as a second language using a NS norm approach (Kachru 1985; Jenkins 2000; McKay 2002; Lundahl 2014; Jenkins 2000; Xie 2014). In an attempt to understand the spread of English worldwide, one can look to Kachru’s model of World Englishes. This model consists of three circles (The Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle), which categorise the spread of English worldwide. The Inner Circle represents countries which use English as their native language. The countries of the Outer Circle includes countries where English, through imperial expansion, became a second language. Finally, we have the Expanding Circle, which is made up of countries learning English as a foreign language. However, since the two Outer Circles, today outnumber the amount of English speakers in the Inner Circle, researchers problematize the traditional NS norm approach with an Anglo-American focus (Jenkins 2000; Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011; Lundahl 2014; Xie 2014; McKay 2012). As the English language has spread across the globe, it has become further influenced by the norms and traditions of the two Outer Circles. The norms and traditions of these Non Native Speakers (NNS) must then also be recognized when teaching English, in an attempt to develop tolerance and moreover, to avoid prejudices and stereotypes toward varieties of English other than the NS (Jenkins; 2000; Banks 2008; Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011; Xie 2014). Using an Intercultural approach means exposing pupils to teaching materials that highlight other cultures than those of the Inner Circle (McKay 2012; Lundahl 2014; Xie 2014).
In Sweden, we come across the English language on a daily basis through various types of media, as well as being further imposed on us when walking down a street with signs spelling out, for example, ‘sale’. English has thus become a part of a typical Swede’s day, no longer depending on Inner Circle norms. Moreover, the SBE (2012) supports an Intercultural approach in the English classroom. However, our experience is that English teaching in Sweden, overall, tends to be built upon the content of teaching materials promoting an NS norm approach. Even so, it has been hard to come by studies carried out in Sweden that investigate which approach Swedish English K-3 teachers use. Therefore, we are hoping our project may shed some light on this particular matter, and as a result, make a valuable contribution to the discussion overall.

As aforementioned, interculturality is considered a key competence by the SBE (2012), which cannot be overlooked when wanting to be an involved citizen. The SBE further explains that an involved citizen is someone who should be able to “interact in heterogeneous groups” (p. 11) as well as working together with those “who do not think exactly like oneself” (p. 12). According to the SBE (2012) this is what defines an intercultural perspective, namely to possess an “empathic ability, an ability to switch perspective and an ability to be able to mirror your own thoughts and ideas in those of others” (p. 12). Rather than isolating language learning to nation borders, the syllabus further suggests that it should be viewed as a social and communicative happening that stretches across borders. (Skolverket 2011a p. 10).

The National Curriculum (Skolverket 2011) emphasizes the importance of an Intercultural approach when teaching English by stating:

- It is important to have an international perspective, to be able to understand one’s own reality in a global context and to create international solidarity, as well as prepare for a society with close contacts across cultural and national borders. (p. 12)

- Teaching should encourage pupils to develop an interest in languages and culture. (p. 32)

- Teaching of English should aim at helping the pupils to reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. (p. 32)

Our aim is to describe what researchers say about an NS norm approach as well as an Intercultural approach when being used as a pedagogical tool, with specific attention being paid to the aspect of culture. Furthermore, we will compare these findings with the approaches
actually used in classrooms by Swedish K-3 teachers during their English teaching. In doing so, we will look closer at what teaching materials the teachers use, as well discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these. Do the materials used offer the pupils opportunities to develop the ability “to understand one's own reality in a global context and to create international solidarity, as well as prepare for a society with close contacts across cultural and national border”? (Skolverket 2011 p. 12). Moreover, we will consider the teachers’ own reasoning behind using the chosen approach. Finally, we will analyse the implications of using either approach in the discussion, arguing that pupils should be given opportunities to be exposed to a diverse range of varieties of English rather than just that of the NS, as English today is a language spoken worldwide. As a result of such a diverse exposure to English, we reason that pupils might avoid stereotypes and prejudices against other varieties of English as well as developing an understanding for cultures all around the globe, and increase their international solidarity and tolerance (Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011; Banks 2012; McKay 2012).

As Matsuda (2002) pointed out:

When students are exposed to a limited section of the world, their awareness and understanding of the world also becomes limited. Students may not desire to further explore those parts of the world they are not familiar with (as cited in Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 223).
2. **Aim and Research Question**

The purpose of our study is to investigate if the K-3 classroom in Sweden use a Native Speaker norm approach or an Intercultural approach during the teaching of English.

1. Are teachers using a Native Speaker norm approach or an Intercultural approach in the K-3 Swedish English classroom?

2. What is the reasoning behind using either approach?

3. What are the implications of using either approach?
3. Previous Research

This section will explain the NS norm approach and Intercultural approach closer. In doing so, the concept of culture will be defined. Furthermore, Kachru’s model will be presented in an attempt to clarify the role of English as an international language. Advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches will also be investigated.

3.1 The Sociocultural Perspective within the Intercultural and NS norm approach

According to the sociocultural perspective and the research carried out by Vygotsky (1978), culture learning is a social concept and an integrated part of a child’s early language acquisition, and thus relevant to the Intercultural as well as the NS norm approach, overall. Piaget (1976) highlighted the value of increasing the learner’s understanding and tolerance of other nations according to the United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights. His ideas reflect those of the Intercultural approach, as he further stated that in order to foster great national citizens, we need to add culture and internationalization to education. This is, to prevent children from developing prejudicial ideas of different cultures and instead foster citizens that respect and value each other’s cultures and ways of living.

3.2 What is Culture?

Since culture is a recurring theme in the discussion that is the English language, one needs an understanding of its meaning. Culture is a complex concept to explain due to being a social experience (McKay 2002 p. 82). Every person who encounters a certain aspect of culture will perceive this subjectively in terms of what it is and what meaning it carries for them personally. Culture is thus a non-linear experience and prone to change over time. However, in an attempt to pinpoint culture further, Spradley (1980) suggested focusing on three aspects in particular, namely, “cultural artifacts” (“what things people make and use”, such as crafts and dress) (as cited in McKay 2002 p. 82), “cultural knowledge” (“what people know” such as literature or theatre) (p. 82) and “cultural behaviour” (“what people do” courtesy or body language) (p. 82), which we all learn about as group members.

The concept of culture is often compared with an iceberg, as approximately 90% of culture lies beneath the surface. The idea with this well-known metaphor is to highlight that culture has
different layers that are more or less visible, but that all play an important role when attempting to understand someone's background. This idea was brought to our attention during a seminar at Malmö University by Ingrid Hortin (2016.10.14). The bottom of the iceberg is where the culture is rooted the deepest, where we find the unconscious rules of culture, for example, definition of obscenity, relations to age, class or gender. A little closer to the surface we find the unspoken rules of culture, which can be courtesy, personal space or body language. At the top of the iceberg we find the surface culture, which is the one most visible, for example, what music you listen to, how you dress or what you eat. These layers define who we are, where we come from and what we believe in, and need to be considered equally. The concept of culture is central to the Intercultural approach. The approach highlights the importance of learners in the Expanding Circle to be given opportunities to express their own cultural identity, rather than that of Inner Circle countries. This is in contrast to the NS norm approach, where learners are mainly taught about the culture in Inner Circle countries. In an attempt to clarify this further, Kachru’s model will be explained in the next paragraph.

3.3 Kachru’s Model

Over time, English has spread across the globe and has moved away from being used merely by native speakers. On the quest to understanding what an international language actually is, one can look at Kachru’s model, as previously mentioned. In his model, Kachru categorizes the use of the English language into three groups. The “Inner Circle” (McKay 2002 p. 10), is made up of countries where English is used as a native language, such as America and the United Kingdom. There is the “Outer Circle” (p. 10), which consists of multilingual countries (often colonies) using English as a second language (India, Singapore etc.). Finally the “Expanding Circle” (p. 10) represents countries such as Sweden and Japan, where English is studied as a foreign language. As a result of this spread, the use of the English language has gradually reached international status, and is, as a result, no longer confined to the Inner Circle countries only.

According to Xiaoqiong and Xianxing (2011) the Inner Circle consists of only five countries (United Kingdom, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) with a total population of approximately 350 million people. However, when looking at figure 1 below, one can easily see that the remaining two circles actually exceed the amount of native speakers belonging to the Inner Circle. Apparently India and China make up for approximately half a billion English users alone. As a result of this spread, varieties of English have developed globally within their own
context of local history (p. 219-221). Still, Kachru (1985) referred to the Expanding Circle as “norm dependent (as cited in Matsuda 2012 p. 20). With this in mind, researchers problematize the ideal of the NS as English has, over time, developed into a heterogenic language rather than a homogeneous one (Xie 2014 p. 43). As a consequence, researchers further argue that the Inner Circle cannot claim ownership of the English language and that “norms and standards should no longer be determined” (Schneider 2003 p. 237) by the same.

![Kachru's model](image)

Figure 1 Kachru’s model (McKay 2002, p. 10).

### 3.4 A Native Speaker Norm Approach

An NS norm approach underscores norms and values of Inner Circle countries, thus using the NS as its predominant focus (Jenkins 2000; Xie 2014). However, as Schmitz (2012) states, NS cannot be considered a uniform group, all sharing the same level of proficiency in English. NS is, in fact, a diverse group, consisting of many different social and regional varieties where not all speak a “standard academic English” (p. 257). These social and regional varieties will vary depending on what Inner Circle country the NS belong to. However, varieties such Scouse, Cockney or Pidgin English could be used to exemplify this particular point. The NS ideal could thus be regarded as problematic during the teaching of English, as it only highlights one type of English at the expense of all other variations, even though NNS are likely to interact with all different variations of English, even those of other NNS (Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 222). Jenkins (2000) further argues that English does not depend on NS norms, seeing as it is a language used for contact in a multicultural setting.

Matsuda and Friedrich (2012) stress that the frequent use of an NS norm approach in English teaching in the Expanding Circle simply comes down to tradition. Typically, this is the
predominant way that English has been taught, and therefore often the only way teachers know how to do it (p. 23). Matsuda and Friedrich (2012) further mention that it is indeed reasonable for these countries to use either American or British English as “the main instructional variety” (p. 23). However, this does not mean that this particular instructional variety is unproblematic. Matsuda and Friedrich (2012) inform that it could affect the pupils’ appreciation of other English varieties.

Lundahl (2014) points out that an NS ideal is “unrealistic” (p. 229) with regards to pronunciation, as only a lucky few NNS achieve to sound native-like. A focus on native-like pronunciation in English could thus possibly affect the pupils’ self-esteem negatively, seeing as it may be an unattainable goal for many. Still, research shows that English teachers find a native-like pronunciation to be essential (Xie 2014). In Xie’s study, of 104 Chinese English teachers from 7 different universities in China, only 14% of these “did not consider standard pronunciation as an important objective” (2014 p. 46) However, the English syllabus does not once suggest that we should strive towards any particular English during lessons in school (Lundahl 2014 p. 48), putting the focus on NS of the Inner Circle in general into question. Kachru’s (1985) labelling of the Expanding Circle as “norm-dependent” (as cited in Matsuda & Friedrich p. 20) on the Inner Circle suggests that “learners of English in the Expanding Circle are simply expected to imitate native speakers” (Hino 2008, as cited in Matsuda & Friedrich 2012 p. 20).

Lundahl (2014) explains that since English as a second language predominantly highlights the NS as a linguistic ideal, it is only natural that the cultural norms depicted during English lessons will mirror those typical of the NS. This is supported by McKay (2012), who also points out that the cultural norms of Inner Circle countries, overall, can be seen in teaching materials. For example, listening exercises might only present pupils to Native Speakers from England or the United States, using a specific syntax as well as talking about baseball or high-tea, which then reinforces the stereotypical idea of the NS (p. 66 - 68). According to Lundahl (2014) this becomes problematic, since Inner Circle countries carry a long history of cultural diversity, which the teaching materials should attempt to reflect (p. 229).

Hino (2012) mentions a catchphrase commonly used in advertisements for teaching materials: “If you want to speak real English, you have to think like Americans” (p. 31). Hino continues by debating the pros and cons of such an outlook when teaching English in the Expanding Circle. On the one hand, he reasons that there is no doubt that an Anglo-American perspective can
widen learners’ cultural horizons. On the other hand, this type of NS norm approach excludes indigenous values and norms of the Expanding Circle, making it hard for these students to express their own cultural identity (Hino 2012 p. 31). Hino (2012), however, explains that this issue can be solved by using an Intercultural approach, where the cultural norms and values of the Expanding Circle get to be included (p.31-33).

According to McKay (2012), English teaching materials is an area that has seen little development overall, which means they often tend to have a NS norm approach. She further informs us that, typically, international teaching materials used for English teaching are often textbooks organized by different themes, such as “My Birthday Party” or “At the Post Office” (p. 72) or by language function such as “Apologizing” or “Making requests” (p. 72). Themes that highlight westernized traditions or institutions could be unrelatable to some Expanding Circle learners. For example, it might be unlikely that Swedish pupils and teachers can fully relate to a text about specific traditions in New Zealand. In addition to this, Inner Circle customs and holidays as well as expectations on the NNS, in particular NS contexts are often brought forward in these materials (McKay 2012 p. 72) This is a so called “product-based view of culture” (Lundahl 2014 p. 68), where features of Inner Circle countries are emphasized and seen as different or exotic. Lundahl (2014) continues by giving an example of Australia where textbooks might focus on the outback and kangaroos, but fail to recognize that the majority of the Australian population, in fact, reside in large modern cities, living lives similar to those of many Swedes (p. 68).

What then happens when we advocate a teaching style that only or mainly covers the culture of those countries that are already overrepresented? In 1969, Banks (2008) wrote that in school textbooks in the USA, for example, Mexican Americans and American Indians were often stereotypically represented, if represented at all. Unfortunately, this has not changed over time as much as one could have hoped. In schools today, cultural groups that are structurally excluded or discriminated against are still suppressed in education (Banks 2008, p. 130-131). This applies for schools in Sweden as well, with the Inner Circle countries getting most of the attention and the Expanding Circle countries seldom mentioned.

3.4.1 Advantages of Using a Native Speaker Norm Approach

Since there has been little development in the area of English teaching materials, most of them focus on Inner Circle countries (McKay 2012 p. 70). However, a consequence of this is therefore
an overrepresentation of such materials on the market. A natural result will then be that schools will have a lot to choose from when looking to invest in new materials.

Furthermore, teachers and learners are likely to have previous experience of using such NS norm materials, meaning they are already well-acquainted with its content. According to Matsuda (2012) such experiences could mean that teachers will not have to go looking for pedagogical ideas with an NS norm approach. This is an aspect worth considering in a profession where educators are already pressed for time and where they often must make “pedagogical decisions on the spot” (p. 6).

3.4.2 Disadvantages of Using a Native Speaker Norm Approach

As previously mentioned, learners in the Expanding Circle may find it hard to relate to Inner Circle content in teaching materials with an NS norm approach. An Inner Circle cultural focus in teaching materials can further reinforce the idea of an “us” and a “them” by emphasizing differences rather than similarities between NS and NNS (Lundahl 2014 p. 68.) An “us” and “them” mentality could be seen as questionable when put in direct relation with the fundamental values of the National Curriculum, where the pupils should be taught to “appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity” (Skolverket 2011 p. 9). Banks (2008) mentions that an “us and them” mentality can happen when we allow an NS norm approach to highlight dominant groups as “the public interest” and the less dominant groups as “a special interest” (p. 132). A type of mentality that, according to Banks (2008), does not belong in education. Schools in Sweden have never been more culturally, linguistically and racially diverse than they are today, a fact which could be considered in making an “us and them” mentality problematic. Moreover, as McKay (2012) explains, when NNS only learn about NS cultural norms they are inadequately prepared to interact interculturally in English. If they have not acquired awareness of English diversity, they might struggle to appreciate it (p. 73).

3.5 An Intercultural Approach

Contrary to the NS norm approach being the ideal, the Intercultural pedagogical approach highlights that all cultures, the Inner, as well as the two Outer Circles should be taken into consideration and thus be equal parts of language teaching and learning. Hence, an Intercultural approach could be considered an alternative pedagogical method to the conventional Anglo-American English that we see in educational contexts (Hino 2012). Followers of the Intercultural approach consider language to be a tool for expressing identity, rather than just a
tool for communication, which makes culture an important factor (Polzenhagen 2009). This is a rather new approach in the field of New Englishes, and Polzenhagen (2009) further problematizes that given the romanticizing of cultural and linguistic diversity, one may find it strange that this field is widely neglected in studies on English, internationally. Nevertheless, The SBE (2012) refers to interculturality as a “key competence” (p. 11), making it hard to overlook its relevance in the English K-3 classroom.

Xiaoqiong and Xianxing (2011) state that, the lingua franca status of English means that a large proportion of the Outer and Expanding Circle countries depend on English during higher level studies or professional endeavours, to communicate with each other rather than with English users of the Inner Circle. Their study (2011) found that during a period of five years, only four of 75 Chinese exchange students, studying at China Three Gorges University, chose to study in an Inner Circle country, namely, America. The remaining 71 students went on to study in Expanding Circle countries such as South Korea and France. According to Xiaoqiong and Xianxing, these 71 students will have little to no use of NS norms during their NNS-NNS interactions in an Expanding Circle country. However, they are likely to have conversations about their own culture making the inclusion of cultural norms of the Expanding Circle essential when learning English (Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 222). Therefore, materials should further aim to reflect the cultural norms of this circle. Xie (2014) explains that this means that images, characters and texts in teaching materials cannot present only Inner Circle norms but must strive to represent, for example, traditions and lifestyles typical for the two outer circles as well, something the Intercultural approach does (p. 45). As Alptekin (2002) points out:

How relevant is the importance of Anglo-American eye contact, or the socially acceptable distance for conversation as properties of meaningful communication to Finnish and Italian academicians exchanging ideas in a professional meeting [in English] (as cited in Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 222).

Banks (2008) states that teachers should strive towards helping their pupils become democratic citizens; and in doing so, they need to help them to develop “an identity and attachment to the global community and a human connection to people around the world” (p. 134). Banks therefore highlights the importance of using textbooks and other teaching materials that use an Intercultural approach, representing less dominant cultures as well (p. 135). As Xiaoqiong and Xianxing’s study (2011) showed, English as a global language is used far beyond the borders of the Inner Circle countries, as opposed to what the NS norm approach suggests. However, this
is not the only reason why interculturality is important to integrate in language education. According to Banks (2008), interculturality is further important in order to enable students to develop democratic racial attitudes and cosmopolitan values (p. 134). Banks (2008) further notes that by using multicultural teaching materials, the students can become more considerate towards people of other cultures and even choose friends from outside their own cultural group on a larger scale. Banks (2008) describes parts of the aims of education being to create “a transformative classroom” (p. 136), a classroom in which cooperation between ethnical or cultural groups is fostered, rather than competition. He claims, “Cooperation promotes positive interracial interactions and deliberations” (p. 136). He adds that research has shown that a cooperative learning style increased the students’ motivation, empathy and self-esteem.

3.5.1 Advantages of Using an Intercultural Approach

Whilst using an Intercultural approach may require some effort from teachers collecting teaching material that covers Expanding Circle cultures, an advantage is; one does not have to look far as a great deal of intercultural teaching materials can be found online, for free. This rather than relying on content in readymade teaching materials, which often is the case when using an NS norm approach. McKay (2012) highlights, for example, the importance of NNS-NNS interactions in the classroom. As this cannot be done using a textbook, one way of doing so could then be to use free digital platforms, such as eTwinning, to take part in collaborations with other schools in Europe and beyond. eTwinning is an online community set up by the British Council in 2005, originally initiated by the European Commission, allowing schools to find partners and work together on projects (British Council 2017). The online platform also offers free resources. This type of online platform might give teachers and students opportunities to develop their intercultural skills by being exposed to other Expanding Circle cultures through sharing and collaborating directly with each other, rather than having to adapt to an NS norm. (Internationella Programkontoret 2011 p. 8-10). These kinds of collaborative activities could make pupils aware as well as appreciative of English as an international language, corresponding to the aforementioned aims of the National Curriculum. By creating an intercultural classroom, teachers might create a safer, more relatable classroom climate for pupils of minority cultures. At the same time a teacher can help foster democratic and empathic citizens: “Cultural democracy is an important characteristic of a democratic society” (Banks 2008, p. 130).
Another advantage of using an Intercultural approach and focusing on such collaborations as mentioned above, is that it relates directly to what the SBE explains are essential abilities in the cosmopolitan society of today, namely, “interact in heterogeneous groups” (p. 11) as well as working together with those “who do not think exactly like oneself” (p. 12). As a result of working with intercultural collaborations learners might further develop “empathic ability, an ability to switch perspective and an ability to be able to mirror your own thoughts and ideas in those of others” (p. 12).

3.5.2 Disadvantages of Using an Intercultural Approach

When striving towards changing the course of English teaching by implementing more cultural diversity, there are a lot of changes that need to be made. Purchasing new teaching materials is one way to go. This, however, will not be cheap and many schools will struggle fitting it into their budget. A more preferable, however time consuming, way is for teachers to create their own material. Nevertheless, Matsuda (2012) suggests that by informing teachers of the cultural gaps in most teaching materials today, teachers are put in a difficult situation. On one hand, teachers are told that the material available in the schools is not adequate for providing the learners with the tools they need to learn a new language. At the same time, however, they are not given any guidelines or instructions on how to change this. A possible consequence of this is that teachers themselves feel unable and inadequate; and since they do not know what changes to make or where to start, they are forced to keep using the same material, only with less confidence than before (p. 6).

According to Matsuda (2012), a shift from the NS norm approach to the Intercultural approach in English teaching in the Expanding Circle is a radical change, and thus not something that can happen overnight. Since the two approaches differ fundamentally in their outlook on language learning, new teaching materials will have to be brought in and teachers will need training in how to teach English practically when using an Intercultural approach. What is more, attitudes overall towards other varieties than Anglo-American English will have to be considered by them (Matsuda 2012 p.5- 6). Matsuda (2012) further states that one of the major problems when it comes to implementing the Intercultural approach is that the discussion is far away from becoming practical, leaving it somewhat unattainable for teachers to use in their day-to-day teaching. From this perspective, teachers could then turn to using an NS norm approach simply because of the lack of straightforward pedagogical ideas when using the Intercultural approach (p. 5-6).
4. Methodology

We contacted four English teachers in K-3, from various parts of Sweden and interviewed them about their implementing of culture in the English lessons as well as their use and opinions on English teaching aids. We decided to use semi-structured interviews, as they are considered an effective tool when carrying out qualitative research. Using semi-structured interviews also allowed us to ask any follow-up questions that might come up during the interview (Alvehus 2014, p. 83). Please find the interview questions in Attachment 2. As interviews are interactive they allow the researcher to ask questions about a specific problem and get the interviewee’s take on it (Bryman 2015).

4.1 Ethical Considerations

We have based our ethical considerations on Forskningsetiska Principer by Vetenskapsrådet (2002). This article highlights four main rules that needs to be considered when doing interviews. These four rules are listed as follows:

- The information requirement states that the researcher should inform the participants about the aim of the research. We sent an email to each interviewee before the interviews explaining the content of our study and providing them with the questions we were going to ask them, in order to give them time to consider their answers and gather any materials that they wanted to show us at the meeting.

- The consent requirement implies that the participants should be reserved the rights to make all the decisions in regards to their participation. In the email we sent out with the questions, we also attached a form of consent that explained their rights, which they were asked to read and sign before each interview. (see attachment 1). It stated that they were free to decline to answer any question and withdraw their participation at any time, without having to give a reason why.

- The confidentiality requirement implies that all research data including people should be handled with confidentiality in the greatest extent possible and any personal details should be stored safely without access for unauthorized people. In the consent form we informed the participants of the confidentiality we could promise, and we also added that we cannot in any way promise that nobody will be able to access the recordings or transcriptions, as we are obliged to present, should our study undergo a reliability test.
• Requirement of usage implies that details regarding individuals should only be used for research purposes. The consent form explained that all participants are anonymous and that names of people and places would be changed.

4.2 Participants

Our goal was to find four teachers to interview. The only criteria we had was that they taught English in a K-3 class. We started by contacting our VFU partner schools. When contacting the first school, we found two participants: one English teacher in a grade 3 and the assisting principal. In the second school, the English teachers, unfortunately did not have time to participate. However, one of the teachers there referred us to a colleague of hers at a different school that taught English, also in a grade 3, who was willing to participate. Thereafter, we attempted to contact all teachers in our circle of contacts, asking if they knew someone who fit the criteria. This is where we found our fourth and last participant, through mutual friends. All names have been changed in order to protect the identity of the participants.

Lena has worked as a teacher in K-3 since 1976 apart from eight years that she spent doing other work. Today she teaches English in the third grade in a K-6 school on the outskirts of a larger city in Sweden.

Emma has worked as a teacher in K-3 for ten years. At the moment she works at a K-3 school in a small town in Sweden where she teaches English in grade 3.

Anna is the assisting principal in a K-6 school on the outskirts of a large city in Sweden. Before she became the assisting principal, she worked as a class teacher and special education teacher in K-6 for 15 years.

Sophia works in a K-6 school in a small town in Sweden. She has worked as a teacher for 16 years in grades K-3 and 4-6. At the moment she teaches English in the grades three, four and five.

4.3 The Semi-Structured Interviews

Alvehus (2014) writes that interviews are an almost inevitable method when it comes to gathering information about how people think, feel and act in different situations (p. 80). In an attempt to create clarity, we wanted to keep the questions clear and few. Beforehand, we had discussed what we wanted to find out during the interviews. We did this because, according to
Alvehus (2014) is not just the interview questions that need to be considered when going into an interview, but any potential follow-up questions as well. Alvehus (2014) suggests that sometimes it is not crucial to have a complete “question battery” prepared but rather that you know for certain what you want to find out (p. 84). When we had a clear idea of what that was, we decided to work with semi-structured interviews, where the questions are open and where there is room left for follow-up questions and discussions that might come up during the interviews (Alvehus 2014, p. 83). There is always a risk with using interviews as the presence of the interviewer can affect the interviewee and any follow-up questions can lead the interviewee in different directions. There is also the risk of the interviewee answering what they believe is the right answer rather than the actual truth. The precautions we took to prevent this were to keep a light and friendly attitude throughout the interviews and be clear that there were no right or wrong answers.

4.4 Procedure

Before each interview we sent the questions to the participants along with the consent form. This was to give them the opportunity to read the questions beforehand and give them the chance to prepare for the interview. We also hoped that this could lead to more considered answers. In order to record the interviews, we decided to use a voice recorder. We were aware that this could possibly bother the interviewee and affect their answer; so before we started each interview, we made sure to ask if the interviewees felt comfortable being recorded, and they also signed a consent form agreeing to be recorded. When using a voice recorder, there is also the risk of the audio being inaudible. However, we were of the opinion that it was better than using pen and paper as this can easily be inadequate since note taking cannot simply keep up with verbal communication (Alvehus 2014, p. 85). Luckily, we have been able to hold three out of four of our interviews face to face, in quiet rooms and therefore get good recordings. One of the interviews was held over the phone, since it was too far to travel to interview the participant. We recorded the conversation through speaker phone, and fortunately we got good recordings here as well and all the data could be transcribed without inaudible gaps. All the interviews were carried out in Swedish. This was a conscious choice, seeing as this was the first language of all the interviewees. Doing the interviews in English might have made some participants uncomfortable, as well as not allowing them to express themselves fully.
4.5 Analysis of Data

After having done the interviews, they were transcribed straight away. This is where one turns talk into text (Alvehus 2014, p. 85). The recordings were transcribed straight after each interview as we wanted the participant’s reactions close in memory. It furthermore gave us the opportunity to discuss the content of the interviews and any reflections we might have or identify answers which were missing. We transcribed all interviews fully, as we wanted to be able to go back and see the whole picture without anything left out. As the interview questions were fairly straight forward and did not require the interviewee to reveal any personal or sensitive information, we transcribed the interviews word for word, as you would in a conversation analysis (Alvehus 2014, p. 85). We did this because we wanted to create authentic and reliable transcriptions where all the answers were visible, rather than “panning for gold” by choosing only the answers that we personally preferred (Alvehus 2014, p. 82). However, we did not find it necessary to include details such as pauses or voice mode.
5. Results

This section will present the data collected during our four interviews with the teachers Lena, Emma, and Sophia all of whom teach English in a K-3, or 4-6 setting, and one assisting principal called Anna. The presentation of this data will be organized into sections in accordance with our aim and research questions, these being: an NS approach or Intercultural approach in the Swedish English K-3 classroom; reasoning behind using the approach; and finally, implications of using either approach. Moreover, the results will be linked to the theoretical literature highlighted in the previous research section. At some points, quotes relevant to our project have been transcribed and translated by us.

5.1 A Native-Speaker and/or an Intercultural Approach in the Swedish English K-3 Classroom?

Two of three teachers describe their English teaching as using an NS approach predominantly, as much of their English lessons focus around Inner Circle countries. These Inner Circle countries are mainly the United Kingdom and America. However, one of the teachers could be seen as using an NS norm approach as well as an Intercultural approach, in an attempt to move away from an only native-speaking classroom.

Lena points to a corner in her classroom where she has put up a huge Union Jack and explains:

There are flags stuck on top of the Union Jack, because we talk about where in the world you speak English and where in the world it is used as a main language, that is, where it is spoken as a native language. I even had to look up… Was it Singapore? I had to check which ones they were, and then the flags of the countries that speak English as a native language was pinned on top of it.

The flags on display are all of the Inner- and Outer Circle countries, the Outer Circle countries being represented by the flags of Ireland, India and Singapore. When it comes to culture, Lena points out that they mainly talk about British and American culture:

First of all, I follow the annual seasons when I talk, of course, and when you get to Christmas you talk about Christmas-related words, English Christmas words, like why they eat turkey instead of ham. I explain why that is and tell them about
different types of traditions. I use a lot of nursery rhymes and many English
traditions come along with these rhymes or tales.

One of the nursery rhymes Lena uses is, for example, Humpty Dumpty. She continues:

We also talk about Guy Fawkes’ day, which takes place in England. That is a kind
of thing some pupils have never heard of before. However, everyone knows about
Halloween these days.

The teaching materials she uses is a workbook called *No Problem* (UR, 1993) which zooms in
on British culture, accompanied by a CD which, according to Lena, only uses people with a
typical British accent: “This material is from 1996 (sic) and you cannot get hold of it anymore,
they stopped publishing it”. When asked if she highlights any other English varieties than
standard British or American English she tells us that:

I think there is more of that in the grades 4-6. I know about some listening exercise
you do then, where you hear different dialects and accents. For K-3 however, I have
not come across a show doing that. I have not seen it anyway, but then I have not
seen all the shows, but it is probably quite unusual.

However, she informs us that she herself tries to point out differences in meaning when it comes
to British or American English. Even so, she does not think it matters what accent her pupils
use. She points out that some of her students speak “Swenglish” and that they are too young to
live up to a British or American speaking ideal. As aforementioned, Lena’s English lessons are
often based around the content in the *No Problem* workbook (UR 1993). The pupils, however,
use an ordinary notebook with a Union Jack glued to the front page. Here they collect
photocopies from *No Problem* (1993) and the texts in English that they write. Themes such as
‘birthday cakes’ and ‘my family’ are included, which are further demonstrated by all white
children with traditional western names such as, for example, Tony Mary and Peter, as well as
an all-white nuclear family positioned neatly on a sofa.

According to Lena, she does not use digital teaching materials, as the school only just obtained
computers for the pupils. Moreover, she points out that there used to be quite a few fun shows
to watch with the pupils, adding, “there probably still is, I guess”, indicating that this is not an
element she includes in her English teaching today. When we asked Lena if she integrated
Swedish culture into her English classroom in any way, she merely expressed that “that would

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be pretty hard to do with only 40 minutes of English per week” and “that is something you might do during a Swedish or Social Science lesson instead.”

Anna is the assisting principal at Lena’s school; however, she used to work as an English teacher in grades 4-6. Anna points out that she used to focus on the culture of Australia, Canada, England and as well as India and South Africa, at times. Even though she informs us that she is not responsible for the teaching materials the school brings in, she still has a big insight in what the school uses overall. She does not, however, mention the No Problem (1993) material that Lena uses. The fact that this material is from 1993 and no longer available on the market could be a reason for this. Anna agrees with Lena in that it is hard to find a teaching material that does not have a British focus. She continues by stating:

Even though most English teaching materials tend to have a British focus, our school tries to embrace all different varieties of English. Because of this, we encourage our teachers to complement textbooks with other types of material, such as UR or YouTube.

Furthermore, Anna is the only one of the interviewees who refers to an ability stated in the National Curriculum. Anna expresses the inclusion of Swedish culture in English as a given here, in being able to make comparisons with other cultures:

In school, you always work with comparisons, as this is one of the abilities pupils should develop. What type of culture do they have in India, and what type of culture do we have here? What similarities are there? Are there any similarities? Are there any differences?

Anna has most recently used a teaching material called Magic! (Robling, Westman & Watcyn-Jones 2012). This material includes a textbook and a workbook that follow two white children called Jack and Jennie, who go on different adventures. The chapters present subjects such as going to the playground, the circus or sending text messages. The holidays mentioned in the book are Christmas, Easter and Halloween.

Emma does not use a specific textbook during her English lessons, but rather tries to base her content around the news, such as the U.S. election “since this has been close at hand”, and also around her pupils’ previous experiences. “Many of them have been to London”. Emma tries to include culture as much as she can, on their level:
For example, we have lived in different countries. Now we have had a flat in London, which we have drawn in our books. These days you can travel anywhere via a computer. So, we have lived in different places and discussed different things we wanted to find out. How do you live there and do you talk to each other? Since it’s a bit different living in New York, we will be going there next, because there will be differences. How do you talk to each other, the usage of “please” and how do the schools work?

From there on, their intention is to visit all English speaking countries, including a few from the Outer Circle, such as India and Singapore, but “they’re not there yet”. Overall, Emma thinks their travelling project is an excellent way to get her pupils curious about the world:

In England you raise your hand and say “Miss”. I think it is really important to realize that countries are different. On the one hand, the pupils might be able to use this knowledge one day, and on the other hand it can probably be really inspiring to get to feel “wow, it’s different there!” which can make you curious about it.

Moreover, Emma points out that “pronunciation is important.” However, at this point it is only to the degree that “you can make yourself understood”. When explaining that, she adds that she does not teach her pupils to sound British or American. However, Emma reveals that the school has a pedagogue called John, who comes from Britain and who only speaks English with the children during breaks and in day care (fritids). Emma believes that John helps the children a lot with their English pronunciation, and has influenced most of the children to use a British accent when they speak. She adds:

We have a teacher in 4-6 that speaks British English, and all of her students speak English with a perfect British dialect.

In addition to this, Emma incorporates English-speaking programs such as ‘English Zone’ (BBC 2002). English Zone (2002) is situated in Britain, and the characters speak American or British English. The programs center around themes such as ‘My Home’ (where all the characters have toast and eggs for breakfast) and my family (mother, father, grandmother and grandfather).

At times, Emma uses photocopied material from “Easy English Grammar” (Tengnäs Läromedel 2012). This material consists of grammar material organized around themes such as “This is me” accompanied by basic exercises in grammar. For example, the pupils are often
asked to translate sentences such as “You and I were in London” or “Last year my dad lived in England”. However, the material also brings in Swedish cultural elements by using sentences such as “I live in Sweden” or “You and your friend were in Sweden”. Emma points out that overall, the materials she uses have a British English focus. When we asked Emma about if/how she includes Swedish culture into her English lessons she answered that she does not, since she had not thought about this.

Sophia’s English lessons take their basis in the teaching material called Right On (Liber 2006). Unlike No Problem (1993), this material presents children, for example Eva and Raji from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The workbook further encourages the pupils to find out how to say ‘hello’, not only in English, but also in languages such as Finnish and German. However, on the audio CD that goes with it, one is only presented with British English. Sophia therefore complements the use of Right On with English books, programs and apps through a service called GR Education, which the municipality provides the schools in the area with. Sophia mentions that these materials overall have a British English focus, even though she (similar to Lena), tries to highlight differences in pronunciation and meaning regarding British and American English. However, she does not correct any of her pupil’s pronunciation in order to make them sound more British or American, even though she herself admits to using an American accent when she speaks. Furthermore, Sophia herself has found an animated program on a YouTube channel where you get to follow a family telling mythological stories with an Indian accent (MagicBox Animation 2015):

We have talked a bit about India, because I have found a series on YouTube, an animated series, in which they speak English with an Indian accent. The episodes are short and can be interesting to show, and ask the pupils to just listen to if it sounds similar or, if it differs somehow. However, this is not really a big focus, but just a few shorter snippets here and there to highlight differences.

She points out that this is important as it helps the pupils in gaining understanding for there being different varieties of English. Moreover, Sophia tries to incorporate Sweden as much as she can into her English lessons, specifically in discussions about similarities Sweden might share with Inner or Outer Circle countries rather than focusing on differences:

It is important that you get to compare and see similarities and differences, but mostly focus on the similarities. Even if you live in different places and belong to
different cultures, there will always be many things you will have in common. I do believe that is important and I think, and hope, that that runs like a red thread through all of my teaching.

5.2 Reasoning Behind Using the Approach

Lena mentions:

I have spent a lot of time in England and worked there and I am married to an American, so those are the cultures I am most familiar with, hence the ones I can support the children with the most.

She uses a textbook to some extent, but collects the majority of her teaching material herself. She adds: “I feel very secure with my English, but if a teacher is not confident with their own language, they might need a textbook to lean on”. Lena does not include any Swedish culture into her English classroom as there is simply not enough time with one English lesson 40 minutes a week. “I leave the Swedish culture for the Swedish lessons”, she says. When talking about English as a global language Lena agrees: "English has indeed become an international language".

Anna has worked with English mainly in grades 4-6 and is now assisting principal. Anna highlights that she believes it is important for children to listen to various kinds of English dialects, for example British and American, and learn how different they can sound. She adds, “I would say that most textbooks today implement a lot of culture.” Anna also mentions that children today have a lot more knowledge about different English speaking cultures, already in early years, due to computer games and the Internet.

Emma teaches English in grade 3. As she is trying to use her pupils previous experiences as the core of her English lessons, and since many of them have been to London, Emma reasons it is only natural that her English teaching will focus on this, and England as a whole. Furthermore, she explains a British focus by pointing out that “traditionally schools want to teach pupils British English”, and this is therefore a focus that has “stuck around.” She is, however, working with culture by making comparisons between different countries:

For example, how Germans don’t take their shoes off when going indoors or, how children in England call their teachers ‘Miss’”. In today’s society, we need a global language that we all share.
Sophia makes comparisons between cultures and tries to focus on similarities rather than on differences. Her approach seems to stem from a perspective of tolerance: “Even if we come from different places and cultures, we still have a lot in common.” She speaks of the importance of including different English dialects into the teaching, but apart from the YouTube series in Indian English, she only mentions dialects from the Inner Circle: “USA, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and also a little bit about South Africa.”

Emma tries to plan her English lessons after current news and events, and as a result gets an overload of American and British focus, since these are the English speaking countries most represented in the media. Lena admits that she simply focuses on British and American English, simply because they are the cultures that she personally is most familiar with. Anna seems to rely on teaching materials to implement culture into the English teaching and Sophia, whilst she makes an attempt to include “cultures of different English speaking countries”, mentions only Inner Circle countries when we ask her which these cultures are.
6. Discussion

This section aims to answer our research questions and is organized accordingly. Furthermore, our research findings will be analyzed and discussed as well as related back to the previous research.

6.1 A Native Speaker norm or Intercultural approach in the Swedish English K-3 classroom?

All four teachers have an approach to English teaching that is mainly NS norm focused. Lena considers herself most familiar with the British and American cultures while Emma claims to be using an approach that mirrors the students’ own experiences, but seemingly only allowing Inner Circle countries to be represented. Anna talks about comparing different English speaking cultures to the Swedish culture, although here as well, only Inner Circle and some Outer Circle countries get mentioned. Sophia tries to include more diverse cultures in her teaching; and just like Anna, she makes comparisons between different cultures to find similarities between the Swedish culture and different English speaking countries’ cultures, however, again only referring to Inner and Outer Circle countries. The SBE (2011) states that “teaching should encourage pupils to develop an interest in languages and culture (p. 32), and focusing on similarities rather than differences is one way to implement tolerance and a positive attitude towards different cultures (Lundahl 2014 p. 70). However, in order for this to serve a purpose, one needs to include not only Inner and Outer Circle countries but Expanding ones as well.

Although both Lena and Sophia use a specific textbook provided by their schools, these look very different. Whereas Sophia’s teaching material has a more Intercultural approach, and moves away from a traditional NS approach, Lena’s does not. Along with the traditions Lena herself chooses to bring forward (Halloween, Guy Fawkes, turkey at Christmas), the themes (birthday cakes, my family) and characters (all white) in her material No Problem (1993) are in line with those that McKay (2012) brought forward and problematized as being westernized. As a result, they become unrelatable to some Expanding Circle learners (McKay 2012). Lundahl (2014) also expressed doubt concerning NS focused teaching materials failing in reflecting a cultural diversity, as Inner Circle countries carry a long history of this (p. 229). Lena, moreover, told us that she finds nursery rhymes, such as ‘Humpty Dumpty’, among others, to be a useful element of her English teaching as “they often focus on traditions”. As a result, Lena’s teaching
could be seen as “norm dependent” (Kachru 1985 as cited in Matsuda 2012 p. 20), highlighting NS norms and values such as traditional foods and rhymes. Hino (2012) argues, that such an approach complicates the Expanding Circle learner’s need to express their own cultural identity, by ignoring their specific norms and values (p. 20). According to the findings of Xiaqiong and Xianxing (2011), it is probable that Expanding Circle students will interact with other NNS rather than only NS. Hino (2012) argues that, as a result, the Expanding Circle learners need to learn to express their own cultural identity. This is an opportunity the teachers could give their pupils by engaging them in a collaboration, such as eTwinning, however; none of the teachers show any awareness of such Expanding Circle focused activities. A predominant focus on western norms and the NS could further be argued not to agree with the guidelines of the steering documents as they might struggle to prepare pupils “for a society with close contacts across cultural and national borders” (Skolverket 2011 p. 12).

Furthermore, neither Emma nor Lena integrate Swedish culture into their English lessons. Emma simply has not considered it, whereas Lena argues that she does not have time to do it, and therefore she rather focuses on this during a “Swedish or Social Science lesson”. However, both Lena’s assisting principal Anna, and also Sophia, underscore the importance of a Swedish perspective during English teaching. Anna states that the inclusion of Swedish culture is a natural part of English, as making comparisons is a part of the abilities in the National Curriculum; “What type of culture do they have in India, and what do we have in Sweden? What similarities are there?” She also says, “textbooks today implement a lot of culture.” However, having looked through the textbook that she has been using (Magic! 2012), we noticed it includes little to no cultural diversity. Anna’s outlook on Swedish culture in English teaching is similar to that of Sophia, who also stresses the importance of highlighting similarities, rather than differences, between Sweden and other cultures when you teach English. As Banks (2008) and Lundahl (2014) point out, a focus on similarities rather than differences can be a way to avoid an “us” and “them” way of thinking and could thus be seen as invaluable from a perspective of tolerance (p. 70).

6.2 Reasoning Behind Using the Approach

All teachers agreed that children’s exposure to English has increased rapidly over the last years, with TV, computer games, the Internet and music, leading to children having a lot more English knowledge starting school, than they did only a few years ago. All four also agreed that due to the same factors, children have a deeper understanding about different cultures within the
English language and are often familiar with the fact that there are a variety of dialects and cultures in English speaking countries (Lundahl 2014). Two of the teachers mentioned that English is an international/global language and is therefore very important. Anna and Sophia mentioned the value of making comparisons between different cultures, as stated in the National Curriculum (2011). McKay (2002) highlights the value of teaching children about different cultures in order to create solidarity and tolerance (p. 83). This being said, we see little of the cultures in the Outer and Expanding Circle; and in all classrooms, the Anglo-American angle is clearly over-represented. Overall, all four teach in a way where British or American English is the norm, and a few Outer Circle cultures make guest-like appearances in the lessons. When they do though, it seems to be mostly to have something different to compare the Anglo-American norm with. The Outer and Expanding Circle cultures are not being taught on their own. The only place where we actually saw traces of an intercultural language teaching approach was the teaching material “Right on” (Liber 2006), used in one of the schools. However, the teacher using this material did not highlight the value of this at all. Researchers advocate the values of creating a communicative classroom without an NS ideal, in order to motivate the learners and authenticate the language learning (Lundahl 2014; Dysthe 1996; Pinter 2006; Lightbown & Spada 2013; Gibbons 2015). All four teachers agree that the most important part of English teaching in the early years is to give the pupils the courage to speak English, rather than teaching them a specific dialect. However, none of the teachers mentioned any attempt towards moving away from an NS norm. Emma mentions that in her experience, in both English and Swedish the children often parrot the teachers and mimic the way they talk: “We have a teacher in 4-6 that speaks British English, and all of her students speak English with a perfect British dialect.” This leaves us wondering, if this is the goal, do we really teach pupils to communicate identity through English, or do we teach them to simply sound like the teacher?

6.3 Implications of Using Either Approach

According to the National Curriculum, “teaching of English should aim at helping the pupils to reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (2011, p. 32). Since “contexts and parts of the world where English is used” is not specified, and thus open for interpretation, one may choose any part of the world where English is used. However, since English is used globally, there will be many parts and contexts to choose from. Even though our findings show that all interviewed teachers display an understanding of English being an international language and that they strive to help
their pupils to reflect over the aforementioned aspects in the Steering Documents, the “parts of
the world where English is used” are predominantly interpreted as Inner/Outer Circle countries
and thus give their English teaching a NS norm focus. Banks (2008) argues that in order to make
pupils more culturally responsive to people of different ethnicities and cultures, schools need to
modify their teaching strategies to include more cultural diversity (p. 130).

The SBE does not express an emphasis on Inner Circle countries when teaching English, but
rather suggests a focus away from “nation borders” (Skolverket 2011a p. 10). Nevertheless, our
findings indicate that this is still what is happening in English classrooms in Sweden. The
teaching materials used by three of four teachers further stressed an Anglo-American focus.
Even so, our findings go against those of Xie (2014), which indicated that teachers still strive
for their pupils to gain native like pronunciation (p. 46), our interviewees paid no attention to
what type of accent/pronunciation was used when speaking English, only indicating an
importance for their pupils’ English speech to be clear. At this point, our interviewees rather
seem to agree with Lundahl (2014) who claims the NS ideal to be “unrealistic” (p. 229) when it
comes to pronunciation, as few NNS manage to sound native-like. However, since Xie’s
research focused on students at university-level rather than on a K-3 level, it is reasonable to
assume that Xie’s professors will have different expectations on their students’ English speech
than that of a primary school teacher. Not only will the students in Xie’s paper have studied
English for an extended period of time, meaning they have reached an advanced level of the
language, they are a part of the academic world with different demands on language skills as
compared to 6-10-year olds only just starting out. Nevertheless, our interviewees highlight NS
norms in almost every aspect of their English teaching. If native speakers are the only reference
pupils will have to the English speech, it is likely this could influence them trying to sound
native-like, despite this being their teacher’s intention or not. In fact, only Anna and Sophia
highlighted the importance of other English varieties than only a British or American; still, these
were only from the Outer Circle and then mainly India. As a consequence, our interviewees’
English teaching fails to help their pupils in developing “an identity and attachment to the global
community and a human connection to people around the world”, as previously mentioned by
Banks (2008, p. 134). If their pupils received opportunities to hear and even speak to other
varieties of English from the Expanding Circle too, they might appreciate the diversity of the
language rather than a norm. Furthermore, as Polzenhagen (2009) pointed out, pupils will learn
using English in a way to express identity, rather than merely use it for communication.
Where culture is concerned, pupils were still mainly being introduced to the surface culture of NS countries, such as food and music; however, no deeper understanding of the remaining two layers of the iceberg, namely, shallow and deep culture, were expressed. As a result, one could argue that English teaching in Swedish classrooms is still confined to nation borders, rather than viewing the language as a tool to communicate with not only native speakers worldwide. When mainly one variety of English is introduced, the teachers seem to be forgetting that their pupils are likely to come in contact with all different varieties of English, even those of other NNS (Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 222), and thus going against their own expressed understanding of English as an international language. This is possibly an indication that the teachers have not been trained in how to teach English using an Intercultural approach, and are thus not aware of how such an approach can be implemented into their English teaching.

Two of the four interviewees indicated an inclusion of Swedish culture; nevertheless, only when put in direct comparison to an Inner/Outer Circle country. According to Jenkins (2000), an NS norm approach is problematic as English today is a language used in multicultural settings, rather than for occasions where only Inner Circle countries are included (p. 1). According to McKay (2012), an Inner Circle focus could, as a result, leave pupils badly equipped for intercultural interactions in English, as they have not been taught to appreciate diversity. Since the number of English users in the two Outer Circles exceed that of the Inner Circle, pupils are likely to come across interactions with other NNS and not only NS (Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011 p. 222).

With national borders eroding, and English being the main global language in the world, one could speak of the importance of including all different NS cultures into the English education. McKay (2002) highlights that in order to understand our own culture, we need to understand the culture of others (p. 83). All four teachers agree with this, saying that culture indeed is an important part of language teaching. Piaget (1976) discusses the importance of culture and internationalisation in language learning in order to increase students’ understanding and tolerance of other cultures, in accordance with the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights. Sophia, in particular, stresses the fact that she always attempts to find similarities between cultures rather than differences, when making comparisons between cultures in her classroom. The SBE (2011) states that it is important to have an international perspective and to be able to understand one’s own reality in a global context and to create international solidarity, as well as prepare for a society with close contacts across cultural and national borders (p. 12). Emma is using the
children’s experiences as a core in her teaching, and her idea of letting the pupils “move” to different countries and find out what they need in order to be able to adapt. This, however, does not serve an intercultural purpose, when not moving across the borders from Inner Circle countries. Although all teachers do try to implement culture into their English teaching, they all lack in including cultures from particularly the Expanding Circle. This, in accordance with what we both have seen during our VFU periods. Lundahl (2014) points out that an education that lacks of interculturality can easily create an “us and them” attitude (p. 68) that according to both the SBE and the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights, does not belong in school. One might argue that this is a mentality that cannot be developed in school alone, but adding cultural diversity into the language teaching is indeed one way to pay attention to certain underrepresented cultures. Banks (2008) believes that intercultural teaching, if properly implemented in teaching, will help children to develop a greater acceptance towards different cultures and even make more friends outside of their own race.
7. Conclusion

At this point, we have collected previous research on an NS norm approach and an Intercultural approach, as well as having investigated which approach Swedish English K-3 teachers use during the teaching of English, and are thus able to answer our three research questions.

Previous research (Banks 2008; Xiaoqiong & Xianxing 2011; Hino 2012; McKay 2012; Lundahl 2014; Xie 2014) found that an NS norm approach highlights the usage of an Anglo-American ‘Standard English’, as well as the norms and values of Inner Circle countries at the expense of Outer and Expanding Circle Countries. In doing so, the approach ignores the fact that English is being spoken worldwide, and consists of many varieties away from the NS norm. Moreover, the content of English teaching using an NS norm approach can become unrelatable to some Expanding Circle learners (McKay 2012 p. 72), running the risk of presenting the learners with the idea of an “us” and “them” (Lundahl 2014 p. 68). As a result, an NS norm approach might emphasize the usage of stereotypes and prejudice. An Intercultural approach, however, stresses the importance of including Expanding Circle cultures into the teaching of English as well, by using an international perspective. With the growing use of English in the Expanding Circle, it is likely that NNS will interact with each other directly, thus needing the tools to help them express their own cultural identity, rather than that of an NS (Hino 2012 p. 31). The Intercultural approach aims to provide learners with these tools, as well as supporting them in developing tolerance and solidarity in a world that is overall growing to become more cosmopolitan (Banks 2008 p. 134).

The first question is Are teachers using a Native Speaker norm approach or an Intercultural approach in the K-3 Swedish English classroom? Our findings show that even though all teachers showed awareness of the importance of English as a global language, none of them included any Expanding Circle country other than Sweden into their teaching of English. Even so, it was only one teacher and the assisting principal that mentioned a limited inclusion of Sweden. Other than that, the predominant focus of all interviewees’ English lessons were that of norms and traditions of Inner Circle countries, and to a certain extent, Outer Circle countries, thus using a NS norm approach. We have come to the conclusion that this choice of approach comes down to tradition. Typically, English teaching highlights the norms of Inner Circle countries making the NS speaker approach the only approach to the English language that the interviewees are familiar with and know. The teachers do not know and have not been trained
to teach English, using an Intercultural approach. What is more, we conclude that Inner Circle countries are likely to come to mind first, when thinking about English speaking countries, simply as a natural result of what we were taught during our English lessons in school, and by representation in the media. Furthermore, three of the interviewees based their English teaching content around teaching materials provided by their school, which implies that the material the school chooses to invest in could prove to have an impact on which approach gets practiced in the classroom.

The second question asks: What is the reasoning behind using either approach? All teachers seemed to believe that they do include culture into their English teaching and spoke of its importance and value. However, similar to the first question, all four teachers had an Inner Circle focus, showing little to no cultural representation from the Outer- or Expanding Circles. This tells us, that however good the teachers’ intentions are, they simply lack experience and awareness of how to step out of the overrepresented Inner Circle norm and include Outer- or Expanding Circle cultures into the English lessons. Sophia used teaching material provided by the school that she was not very happy with. She tried to complement the material with programs and YouTube clips, but she did not seem to have considered that she could move away from the textbook altogether. The fact that many teachers rely on published teaching materials is easy to understand. It can, as aforementioned, depend on their own school experiences, where British English was the traditional norm, or, perhaps, they lack the confidence that it takes to move away from the textbooks and put together their own material. Lena pointed this out by saying, “If a teacher is not very confident with their own English, they might need teaching materials to lean on”.

The third question is What are the implications of using either approach? The findings show that all teachers depend on NS norms when teaching English. Even though these will be of some value to widening their learners’ cultural understanding, none of these norms focus on the Expanding Circle. This leads us to conclude that the learners in questions will be inadequately prepared to appreciate other norms and English varieties than that of Standard English, as well as struggling with coming to terms with their own identity in a global context.

7.1 Limitations of the Study

There are limitations of this study worth acknowledging which might affect its reliability. One of these is the fact that only three teachers and one assisting principal were able to participate.
A larger group of participants in Sweden might have made any generalizations and conclusions drawn more accurate and thus more reliable. Another limitation to this study is the fact that we used semi-structured interviews. Whilst this is a useful approach in order to get a conversation flowing, by using open questions and creating a sense of a discussion rather than an interview, all interviews took slightly different turns, depending on the interviewee’s response; therefore, the answers we were able to draw from the interviews varied. When transcribing and discussing the interviews afterwards, we always came up with more follow-up questions that we would have wanted to ask. Had we had more experience with interview techniques overall, perhaps we would have been able to think quicker during the interviews, and thus gather clearer answers.

7.2 Further Research

As future K-3 teachers, our research has been focused solely on English teaching in the lower grades. Consequently, the information from the interviews is somewhat limited, as two out of three schools do not teach English at all until grade 3. Therefore, it would be interesting to do the same research in grades 4-6, where English teaching is more established. With this being said, all teachers did speak of the importance of culture in language teaching in spite of being K-3 teachers, thus, the results still apply.

With support from both research and our interviews, we claim that teachers should be more considerate when it comes to implementing cultures from the Outer and particularly Expanding Circles. As many teaching materials on the market today lack cultural diversity, teachers should, in our opinion, be advised and trained practically in how to teach English without using textbooks at all, or at least, how to complement textbooks in order to create more diversity.
8. References


9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of Consent

Samtyckesblankett

Enligt rapportserien *God forskningssed* av Vetenskapsrådet (2011) söker vi härmed ditt samtycke att få spela in intervjun, då vi önskar att utföra kvalitativt god forskning med ett viktigt syfte och samtidigt skydda de individer som deltar i forskningen.

Vi kommer att spela in ljudet under intervjun. Detta är för att vi ska kunna transkribera intervjun på ett korrekt sätt och således få med alla svar.

Vi kan inte lova att ingen kommer att kunna ta del av transkriberingen eller inspelningen, då de kan behöva redovisas om styrkan i våra resultat behöver prövas.


Medverkande besitter rätten att närsomhelst avböja att svara på en fråga eller avbryta intervjun, utan att behöva ange skäl. Detta kommer då tas hänsyn till och inspelningen kommer att raderas omgående.

Jag godkänner ovanstående och lämnar härmed mitt samtycke:

_______________________
_______________________________
Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Only the assistant principal was asked the questions marked with AP (Assistant Principal).

| Lärarens bakgrund | 1. Hur länge har du arbetat som rektor/lärare i F-3?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2. I vilken årskurs undervisar du nu?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
| Inkludering av kultur i engelskundervisningen | 1. Om vi talar om kultur i förhållande till normer och traditioner, inkluderar du kultur i din engelskundervisning och isåfall på vilka sätt?  
|                   | 2. Vilka kulturer fokuserar du på?  
|                   | 3. Inkluderas svenska kultur?  
<p>|                   | 4. På vilka sätt tycker du att din undervisning är givande för eleverna när det kommer till kultur? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Följfråga:</strong> Integrerar du kulturer som inte har engelska som förstaspråk?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
| Fokus på uttal/grammatik | 1. Vilket fokus får uttal och grammatik?  
|                   | 2. Anser du det vara en viktig del av undervisningen?  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3. Förespråkar du något speciellt uttal i din undervisning, så som brittiskt eller amerikanskt?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>
| Användning av läromedel | 1. Vad använder du för läromedel i engelska? Varför just dessa?  
|                   | 2. Använder du program/musik/hemsidor/appar? Varför just dessa?  
|                   | 3. Ansvarar du för inköpen av läromedel? (AP) |
|                   | **Följfråga:** Är du nöjd med läromedlen du använder? På vilka sätt? |
