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Contemporary Popular Culture for Educational Purposes – Teaching English

Samtida populärkultur i syfte att undervisa engelska

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Preface

As the title of this dissertation indicates, the area of interest is the use of contemporary popular culture in English (CPCE) and how this is implemented in the teaching of English. We did not set out to try investigating whether or not CPCE texts are to be used in the teaching of English or not, our interest lay fully in understanding what and how CPCE texts are incorporated. During our investigation further areas of interest arose, such as taking into consideration the aspect of critical literacy, teaching pupils to be aware of what content they are exposed to consuming CPCE texts, both in school and in their leisure time.

We would like to thank some of the people who have contributed to this dissertation in various ways. First and foremost, we would like to thank all of our informants, without your contribution we would never have been able to produce this dissertation. We would also like to thank our tutor Malin Glimäng for her generous contribution of materials and valid comments. Magnus Persson, who wrote *Populärkulturen och skolan* (2000), has served as a valid source, and deserves further recognition thanks to his charitable involvement by contributing updated comments on the area of interest. As final thanks we would like to acknowledge the English faculty at the Malmö School of Teacher Education for the well-founded ground of education you have provided us with heading out into the ‘real world’ as professional teachers.

Sincerely,

Linn & Malin
Abstract
The purpose of this dissertation is to examine four teachers’ of English perceptions of the use of CPCE in their teaching. When reading the control documents of the Swedish school, indications pointing towards the use of CPCE texts in teaching were found. Therefore we took an interest in finding out how teachers choose to implement CPCE in their teaching. We have combined the methods of semi structured qualitative interviews and the use of a focus group to gather the data needed. Our main findings consist of how the concept of popular culture is understood by our informants. They find the concept vast as it entails such a broad variety of texts such as TV-shows, film, the Internet, magazines and literature. Teachers select appropriate CPCE materials with regards to their pupils’ preferences. However, our findings of how these materials are implemented in their teaching of English vary and are to be considered limited.

Keywords and concepts:
Contemporary popular culture in English (CPCE), popular culture, critical literacy, English education, texts
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1 Introduction

This section provides you, the reader, with an overview of our topic of choice, the purpose of our dissertation as well as our research questions.

1.1 Background

Most young people in Sweden today live and breathe popular culture as they engage in texts such as films, popular magazines, TV-shows and computer games on a daily basis. Pupils’ use of popular culture leaves lasting impressions in their minds and emotional lives, which cannot be disregarded coming into the school setting. However, this does not imply that pupils’ experiences from popular culture are to be condemned or less valued or uncritically accepted as genuine expressions for pupils’ own culture (Persson 2000). When today’s pupils enter the school setting, they carry a luggage filled with impressions from the outside world.

Contemporary popular culture in English is one of those items which surround us all in today’s Swedish society. English is a world language and the significance of the language increases constantly. English is the most important language of communication within areas such as science, popular culture and tourism (Skolverket 2006).

Young people today, including pupils met in schools, are influenced by the popular culture they consume. Most often these influences are gained through the consumption of contemporary popular culture in English, hereafter referred to as CPCE. CPCE incorporates a vast variety of popular texts in English. CPCE is probably one of the most frequent sources of English that pupils meet outside the school context. Popular culture makes an impression on them and presumably has an impact on their learning of English. Furthermore, it has an impact on their personal style and taste preferences. We, the authors of this dissertation, both take a major interest in the broad umbrella term “popular culture”. The phenomenon is of interest to us since all pupils come into contact with popular culture on a daily basis. We have both seen language use in pupil produced work, which most likely originated from the English they encounter outside the school setting. It is their use of language, including phrases and certain vocabulary, which gives us reason to assume that it has been acquired from CPCE.

There are no specific guidelines of what to teach in the syllabus for English and this gives the individual teacher the opportunity to bring in any area of interest. This makes English a fascinating teaching subject as there is an unlimited amount of content areas which can be brought in to enhance the learning of English. The national curriculum states that pupils’ prior knowledge and experiences are to be incorporated in the teaching, and this, in use, must imply
bringing in CPCE (Skolverket 1994). Therefore, as a starting point, we assume that the teachers interviewed here will, to some extent, provide us with information using CPCE as a source in their teaching. Our interest lay in finding out how they go about this in their teaching in the classroom setting.

In our search for previous research on CPCE as a means to teach/learn English, most studies we came across focused on the pupils’ perspective. Therefore our purpose in this dissertation is to provide the reader with some insight into four English teachers’ perspectives on using CPCE as a means to teach English in the school setting. In addition, to the insights gained from the teachers, we also asked a focus group of pupils to contribute their thoughts on CPCE as a source for learning English.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine four teachers’ of English perceptions of the use of CPCE in their teaching inside the English speaking classroom. This means finding out how they, using different methods, choose to incorporate CPCE in their teaching. We also take an interest in the possible benefits and downsides these teachers see in using CPCE as a means to teach English and whether or not they see traces of CPCE in their pupils’ language use. To achieve triangulation and a deeper understanding of our area of interest, a focus group of students from Upper Secondary School was also asked to give their perspectives on CPCE as a learning tool in the school setting.

These interest areas led to the following questions:

1.3 Questions

✓ How do teachers of English understand the concept of CPCE?
✓ How do pupils of English understand the concept of CPCE?
✓ How do teachers of English implement CPCE in educational settings?
✓ How do teachers of English view possible benefits and downsides in the implementation of CPCE in their teaching?
✓ How do pupils of English view possible benefits and downsides in the implementation of CPCE in the learning of English?
2 Literature Review

This is a text based on theoretical literature which helps us understand on the one hand, the meaning of popular culture along with other important concepts which connects to popular culture, such as cultural studies, text, critical literacy. On the other how popular culture applies to the Swedish school control documents. Studies of primary relevance in this chapter are Hobbs’s article Non-optimal uses of video in the classroom (2006), Persson’s book Populärkulturen och skolan (2000), a study conducted by the National Agency for Education named Läromedlens roll i undervisningen (2006) along with the syllabus for English at Secondary- and Upper Secondary school and the National Curriculum.

2.1 Popular Culture in Theory and as an Umbrella Term

Popular culture falls into the theoretical field of cultural studies which have developed into its own discipline over the past forty years. Starting in England in the 1960s, cultural studies later spread to the US, Canada, Australia, South America and other places in the world. What is studied is culture, first and foremost modern culture which is an enormously broad area. The specific culture of interest is then studied from the perspective of different culture critical traditions and theoretical approaches. Cultural studies is known for being an interdisciplinary field of studies which has contributed to erasing the boundaries between what was seen as “high” and “low” culture. A cultural study is carried out as a means to understand language, culture and identity (Persson 2000).

The concept of popular culture is an essential part of this dissertation and therefore it is necessary to define the different parts and meanings of the concept. According to the Swedish National Encyclopaedia online, popular culture is an umbrella term for popular literature, popular music and popular press or media (NE 2007).

As mentioned earlier, there is no sharp border between popular literature and literature considered of “high standards” such as books of facts or classics. According to the Swedish Encyclopaedia (2007) popular literature can be characterised as creative and experimental following a certain narrative pattern. They are divided into different genres such as detective novels, pornography, science fiction, thrillers and cartoons. This genre also includes lyrics and slapstick theatre. Popular literature has a tendency to be produced in large quantities.

As with literature, there is no sharp border between popular music and music considered to be of “high standards”. The three main categories of music are popular music, music of arts and folk music. Popular music has general characteristics such as being periodic, symmetric
as well as having a very typical verse and refrain disposition. During the 1900s African American music has also influenced popular music to a greater extent (NE 2007). Popular press is mainly magazines of entertainment, amusement, practical guidance and identification. Comic books and pornographic magazines also belong to this genre (NE 2007).

Storey (2001) distinguishes between the words ‘popular’ and ‘culture’ before defining the concept of popular culture. Storey refers to Williams who is one of the most acknowledged theorists in the field of cultural studies. According to Williams, culture is one of the most difficult words to define in the English language. Williams, famous for his quote which reflects the complexity of culture states that “culture is a whole way of life”. This provides an idea of how difficult the concept of culture is to map out. He has given the word three definitions though. The first definition refers to the process of spiritual, aesthetic and intellectual development as a means to discuss cultural development in terms of artists and poets. The second refers to cultural development in the way of life in a group or a period of time regarding for example sports, holidays and literacy. The final definition that Williams poses has to do with cultural development within intellectual work and practise activity, in particular artistic activities. This refers to for instance the ballet, fine arts and the opera.

The word ‘popular’ means something that many people like, for example literary works set out to win favour among people and culture made by people for amusement. Williams sketches out six definitions of the term ‘popular culture’. First and foremost it can easily be defined as culture that is well-liked among a majority of people. The second definition states that ‘popular culture’ is the “leftovers” of what is considered high or exclusive culture within the cultural range, in other words, it is inferior culture. As for defining the traditional view of cultural differences between high culture and popular culture, the following examples can be of use: High culture is quality press, art cinema and art culture. Popular culture refers to popular press, popular cinema and popular entertainment. High culture on the other hand, does not have to be admired by the majority, as it is considered of a higher standard and in no need of a mass acceptance. As a third definition ‘mass culture’ is taken into account as it is mass produced for the purpose of mass consumption. Fourth, popular culture is defined as culture originated from the people. This definition is highly criticised since it does not consider the fact that people are exposed to mass culture that they did not make themselves. The fifth definition of popular culture is related to the concept of hegemony. When explaining the term hegemony Storey (2001) refers to Gramsci’s definition of hegemony and say that “The way in which dominant groups in society, through a process of ‘intellectual and moral leadership, seek to win the consent of the subordinate groups in society” (p10). The sixth and
final definition refers to postmodernism and the relationship between the two. The postmodernists claim that there no longer is a distinction between high- and popular culture (Storey 2001).

In consequence of the theories at hand, popular culture takes the forms of literature, music, press and media that is produced for the purpose of mass consumption and is well-liked among a majority of people. However, there is no longer a sharp border between what is considered popular culture and culture of high standards. This definition serves as the basic understanding of what popular culture entails in this dissertation.

2.2 Popular Culture in Education

Among other things, this dissertation discusses popular texts, it is thereby necessary to define what is implied by text. At the website for the National Agency for Education in Sweden (2007), the definition of text is stated in the syllabus for Swedish where it states that texts take into account more than the written word. In addition to written texts, pictures, spoken texts and other expressive forms such as moving picture, film and theatre are to be seen as different types of texts (Skolverket 2006). This is the definition of text used in this dissertation.

There is a need for schools to keep up with the rapid changes in the surrounding society, not to mention the changes in the field of culture. Nowadays there is an extensive range of texts that are of importance to and influence young people. These youngsters, met as pupils in school, consume and produce different types of texts, whereby the teaching of literacy is no longer enough without the complement of critical literacy (Skolverket 2006).

For a long time literacy in the school setting was considered as easily defined, namely the ability to read and write. The skills needed were thought to be technical and entirely related to spoken and written language. Supposedly, there was one norm for all individuals to share and be measured against. For the longest time the actual content of the written and spoken language was taken out of the concept of literacy. However, this has changed since the area of critical literacy has arisen. Since the texts pupils in school encounter always convey meaning, pupils must be made aware of the fact that whoever produced the text at hand has an agenda. In other words, a text always expresses values and ideologies (Persson 2000).

As a first step towards critical literacy, the reader/interpreter of a text is to re-read the text at hand, analyze it and look for codes, concepts and ideologies. This way, pupils are taught to distance themselves from the text at hand which might have seemed unproblematic to start with. Step two is to achieve an emotional reflexivity where connections between experiences and culture consumption are to be taken into account. Step three is then to let pupils produce
their own texts questioning the conveyed meaning of the popular texts they encounter. Pupils are also to be asked to produce texts, similar to popular texts. There is a need not only to critically examine texts and use theory but for students to actively produce their own texts and thus make pupils’ learning process more vivid. Since popular culture takes an increasing part in the lives of the young people met in school today, critical literacy needs to be taught as a natural part of literacy, making pupils able to take a stand in the vast flow of popular texts. This implies that popular texts are to be used as teaching material (Persson 2000).

Renee Hobbs (2006), who is the Director of Media Education Lab and Professor of Communication at Temple University in Philadelphia, has carried out an extensive range of studies about the use of media and popular culture in education. Although her findings are set in an American context, they can be applied in the Swedish educational setting, whereby her findings are relevant to this dissertation. In her studies, she considers problematic issues concerning the use of media and popular culture in any subject without a critical perspective. According to Hobbs (2006), too many teachers use videos and other popular texts for all the wrong reasons, such as filling time, for fun, as rewards for good behaviour, or as a substitute teacher. She claims that:

Without a critical perspective, media use in the classroom may replicate the ways that television, video and other electronic media are used in the home, as a passive form of recreation, amusement, or escape that is increasingly a dominant, normative dimension of contemporary leisure among young and old (p.37).

In this way popular texts would not serve as a particularly good source for learning, whether learning refers to languages or not. Hobbs’s research also show that numerous teachers bring in popular culture without reflecting on what educational aims and goals are supposed to be achieved (Hobbs 2006).

Magnus Persson, professor and researcher at Malmö School of Teacher Education, is by his study about popular culture in the Swedish school setting of great importance, contributing background knowledge for this dissertation. He writes in his book Populärkulturen och skolan (2000) that the Swedish educational system aims to base teaching on pupils’ prior knowledge and experiences and as contemporary popular culture (CPC) plays a major role in the lives of young people today, popular texts need to be considered as teaching material. CPC whether in English or Swedish, take part in young peoples’ process of forming lifestyle and identity. Young people today spend a considerable amount of their spare time reading, listening to and
watching popular texts, therefore such sources needs to be acknowledged in the school setting. However, as concluded earlier, defining popular culture is very hard, and to find one sample to represent all popular culture is impossible. Pupils and their teachers will most likely define what CPC is in different ways. It is almost impossible for a teacher to stay fully updated in the area of CPC, as it changes rapidly and incorporates such an extensive range of texts. This does not imply that teachers should feel reluctant to use CPC as teaching materials, however, they need to be discerning in the implementing phase (Persson 2000).

Persson (2000) brings in a historical perspective and explains how a definition came about to separate the low status “popular culture” from the high status “culture”, as popular culture grew more accepted. At an early stage popular culture was seen as a passive source for input, making its audience passive consumers of its’ content. For example in the 1950s people were warned about the influence popular culture might have on women, children and the working class. This in practice meant that, in school, teachers did not incorporate popular culture in the 1950s. Teachers tried to distance their pupils from CPC, simply by avoiding it and acting as if there was no such thing as popular culture. In the late 1960s a project focusing on getting pupils to read came about. This project aimed to waken an interest in reading even if this meant bringing in popular culture in the teaching. This was against what was prescribed in the curriculum and syllabuses and many teachers felt reluctant towards this new approach to popular texts. The project leaders thought that by comparing texts of high standard to the low standard popular texts, pupils would be made more aware of the clear differences between the two. This, it was assumed, would make pupils less interested in popular texts. Needless to say, there was no decrease in the pupils’ interest in popular texts. On the contrary, this approach seemed to promote the opposite. During the 1970s a new perspective on culture arose saying that all culture, high and low, need to be critically examined since culture is a bearer of ideologies, which in turn are in need of questioning. The idea was that the ideologies, values and political stands depicted were buried under the surface in popular cultural texts, and therefore a critical approach towards the text at hand was necessary. This is in line with Hobbs’s (2006) arguments for the need to implement critical literacy in education (Persson 2000).

As Persson (2000) continues his arguments for the use of popular texts as a means for education, he states that there are two different stands towards pupils’ prior knowledge and experiences into consideration in the teaching. The first approach brings in the reality of the students as a static phenomenon, respecting the interest of the pupils but without challenging or problematizing that reality. The second approach brings in the reality of the pupils as an
open process, where room is given for further development and a possible change of their perspective. The latter is referred to as “experience pedagogy”. This approach to learning puts high demands on both pupils and teachers while it also entails a laborious process finding connections between what you read, play, or watch and the society you live in and your own life. Asking pupils to critically examine what they may consider as pure entertainment can be met with resistance because pupils might feel put on the spot and criticized for their presumably indiscriminate consumption of CPC. There is therefore an initial need of a balancing act in order for the teacher not to let too much of his or her own values and perspectives show to the pupils. The concept of experience pedagogy is meant to use pupils’ past experiences to encourage new ones (Persson 2000).

Using CPC in teaching should not only imply implementing texts and critically examine them, but also having the pupils produce their own texts. The pupils’ input and output of CPC invites critical reflections and analysis, which is to be welcomed (Persson 2000).

The National Agency for Education in Sweden has conducted a research on textbooks and teaching aids in education called *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen* (Skolverket 2006). The study is of interest as this dissertation focuses on popular culture as teaching material in education. The results of the study show how different teachers’ use textbooks and other teaching material to fulfil the goals of the national curriculum and syllabus, along with their own opinions on the use of popular cultural texts. The research was conducted with interviews and questionnaires given to educators in fifth to ninth grade at compulsory school.

A study carried out by the National Agency for Education in 2003, previous to *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen* (Skolverket 2006) shows that both teachers of English and their pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject of English, while English is considered interesting and important as pupils use it on a daily basis outside of school. However, this does not mean that all pupils find English as a school subject easy, on the contrary it is considered as a somewhat hard language to learn. The previous study confirms that both parents and children find that good knowledge of English is necessary. Moreover, the education of English in school is often based on textbooks, but with integrated segments of pictures, games, movies, audiotapes, radio, TV-programs and computer programs (Skolverket 2006).

According to the more present research from 2006, teachers find English as a high status subject whereas it is important to learn to be able to communicate with the surrounding world. The fact that English is popular among pupils increases the status level even further, as pupils are surrounded with the language outside of school through movies and music. The teachers interviewed for the report done by the National Agency for Education also find that if they
have enough time to spare, they can give a more varied education with movies and radio as teaching material, time that is not always easy to find. The teachers also use computer rooms to be able to conduct a more varied teaching. The purpose is to arouse interest and make the education more enjoyable. Almost every teacher interviewed agreed that a more diverse teaching leads to more engaged pupils (Skolverket 2006).

Textbooks are the most frequently used material, along with audiotapes and dictionaries, especially if the teachers have been working for more than ten years. The report also reveals that teachers who plan their education together with their pupils have a tendency to use the textbook less. Instead they use magazines, fiction and the Internet. In some cases teachers use these materials as a complement to the textbook to gain a more diverse education. Some teachers find the textbook somewhat dominant, boring, and too strict. The textbook does not allow the pupils to take initiative, however, in a positive manner the textbook is not as time consuming as creating your own assignments and finding other texts. This is why teachers frequently use pupils’ own experiences and interests in education, it increases the pupils’ motivation to learn. A majority of the teachers interviewed use materials they produced on their own, thus they find it important to develop all teaching aids. The textbook does not always consider reluctant learners or students with reading and writing deficiencies. Teachers therefore use magazine articles or commercials to set the level of a specific learning group or individual. This implies that teachers choose materials based on their pupils’ preferences, the teachers’ pedagogical competence and values, and the individual schools’ finances. Moreover, the teachers interviewed in the study believe that showing movies is a way of rewarding the students. Usually when teachers use computers, pupils are supposed to find information for a particular project. There is a contradiction here, since the textbook is considered as a fundamental source but is not used as such. In conclusion, the investigation shows that teaching materials are all based on what is stated in the national curriculum, syllabuses and what the students are expected to produce at the national test (Skolverket 2006).

2.3 Control Documents: National Curriculum and Syllabuses for English

Although it is not clearly stated in the control document for the Swedish school system that popular culture is to be used as teaching materials in school this is implied that the control documents state that teachers are to incorporate pupils’ prior knowledge in their teaching. This, of course, gives teachers nationwide the opportunity to interpret what that means applied in reality. In the curriculum there are no guidelines for what content and how you as a teacher are to teach during your lessons. However, the documents express the need for variation,
creativity and play. The curriculum is however pointing out the need to prepare pupils for the rapid information society in which media literacy is one of the key skills to access both the outside world and to gain an understanding of the society in which they live. Furthermore, the curriculum expresses the need for pupils to learn how to critically examine different sources of information and understand how language, learning and developing a sense of character and identity are closely linked (Skolverket 1994).

Moreover, it is of great importance that the students develop an understanding of their own culture and develop solidarity with other cultures. An international perspective is to be brought into teaching to achieve an understanding of cultural diversity. In addition to the overall overview of the national curriculum, some specific goals and guidelines are stated. Students should for example be able to communicate in English, obtain knowledge about media’s role, and use information technology as a tool for their own knowledge searching. Furthermore, they should be taught to express themselves by using drama, music, pictures and dance. School staff members are distinctively asked to facilitate individual pupils’ learning by relating teaching to activities and experiences they encounter outside the school setting (Skolverket 1994).

The structure and nature of English as a school subject in Swedish schools take into account international communication and English as a global language. Swedish pupils encounter English through different contexts such as television, movies, music, texts and contact with English-speaking people, as well as computer-games and online interaction.

The syllabus for English in Secondary school (Skolverket 2007) is divided into goals to aim for and goals to be fulfilled at the end of ninth grade. The aims and goals are interlinked, although the difference is that aims are developmental and the goals are final. The goals to aim for include the ability to read different types of texts, both for pleasure and for obtaining information. Furthermore, the pupils are to develop a critical skill to acquire sources of information and knowledge about different English-speaking cultures. This will enable comparisons to their own culture. Moreover, the ability to reflect over similarities and differences between the pupil’s own cultural experiences and cultures in English-speaking countries is one of the set goals to fulfil by the end of the ninth grade (Skolverket 2007).

In equivalence to the syllabus for English at Secondary school, aims and goals for the English taught at upper secondary school (Skolverket 2007) are stated. These are further developed, and they build and add to the aims and goals for secondary school. There is a clearer urge for teachers to use the forms of English which pupils encounter outside the school setting.
The syllabus for English A (Skolverket 2007), which is one out of eight core subjects within all the different national Upper Secondary programs, provide opportunities for the pupils to read for pleasure, knowledge and cultural familiarity. To read and understand simple literature, acquire knowledge of social conditions and traditions in English speaking areas, as well as being able to use this knowledge to compare with their own reality, are set goals to receive a pass in English A (Skolverket 2007).
3 Method

This section presents the methodological approaches of qualitative interview and focus groups used in this dissertation. You as a reader will be presented with background information, the concept of qualitative interview and selection, setting and equipment, procedure and empirical findings, along with ethical considerations as well as reliability and validity.

3.1 Background

The purpose of using qualitative interviews and a focus group in this dissertation was to gain a deeper understanding of the CPCE used in the classroom setting. Focus lay on teachers’ perceptions of the concept- and incorporation of CPCE in their teaching of English, and on how pupils’ perceive the same variables. The interviews, which served as the main sources of information in this dissertation, were focused on the teachers’ perspectives on using CPCE texts. As a complement and a second source to the interviews, a pupil focus group discussion was carried out to gain further perspectives on CPCE as a means to teach or learn English. However, the interviews were not focused on if teachers use popular culture in their education, and whether that is feasible or not, rather, the emphasis was on how teachers use popular culture in the classroom and which possible benefits and downsides they see in using CPCE texts as educational material.

3.2 Qualitative Interview, Approach and Selection

Before carrying out interviews there were a few aspects to take into consideration. First and foremost, an interview guide was prepared. In accordance with Hatch (2002) the guide was constructed with the help of different topics. These topics set the framework of what was discussed. Each theme had questions related to it and the guide also helped us, the researchers, to keep the conversation somewhat structured and focused on the content area. As our research was carried out, we used an interview guide entailing topics related to CPCE in education (Attachment 1).

We used open questions which gave the informants an opportunity to speak freely and elaborately. Pauses, intonation and interrupted sentences from the interviewee were also important to acknowledge for the sake of gaining an even deeper understanding of how the interviewee perceived the content area at hand. Recordings of the interviews were made as it was implied by Johansson & Svedner (2006) that doing so is crucial. As this research required
in-depth knowledge of CPCE in the classroom setting, open questions were preferable and the most logical choice of method.

Using a focus group is another form of qualitative interview. A focus group is based on a group of individuals that have similar characteristics and experiences. The selected group is meant to sit down and talk about a specific topic. A moderator keeps the discussion focused on the topics at hand. A focus group usually generates different information than an individual interview as it is based on interaction between several participants (Hatch 2002). In this study we used the focus group as a means to complement the four individual interviews. Instead of using a more structured interview guide, as for the individual interviews, there were topics for discussion similar to the topics given to the teachers, although, without further categorized questions (Attachment 2). The main goal of a focus group is to explore a specific topic in depth through conversation (Hatch 2002).

The positive aspect of a focus group discussion is that this method is not time consuming and the researcher can capture the dynamics of the group as well as observing the interaction between the participants. One negative aspect is that the moderator can take too much control of the conversation and limit the responses of the participants. It is important to mention that the setting of the focus group discussion can be considered somewhat unnatural as the discussion is recorded as well as lead by a moderator (Hatch 2002).

Interviews of four English teachers were carried out of which two work at Secondary school and two at Upper Secondary school. Three of them were male teachers and one was a female teacher. They all had different experiences in teaching. One of the male teachers has been working at Upper Secondary school for twenty-seven years and the female teacher has almost twenty years of experience at Secondary school. The other male teachers have less than ten years of experience. In accordance to Johansson & Svedner (2006) it was anticipated that this would contribute to a variety of findings as different school levels are also taken into account.

The focus group method took place at Upper Secondary school, as collectable data from a focus group at Secondary School would presumably be insufficient. We considered these pupils as too young to be able to discuss CPCE as an educational tool. When carrying out the focus group discussion, three students from grade one and three students from grade two at Upper Secondary school were asked to participate.

3.3 Setting, Equipment and Procedure

The interview took place in an enclosed area. Hatch (2002) states that an interview is preferably to take place in a smaller office or group room with minor disturbances, as one of
the key factors for success is where to conduct a study. Therefore, our interviews were carried out in private settings. During the interview a dictating machine was used to document the conversation. As we are two researchers we carried out two interviews each.

In line with the individual interviews, the focus group discussion was also conducted in an enclosed classroom. A dictating machine was used and one of us took the part as moderator and note taker. As preparation for the interviews, the informants were provided with an information letter about our area of interest and a brief explanation of the abbreviation CPCE (Attachment 3).

We started off the interviews by greeting the informant and thanked her or him for participating. This was followed by an introduction of the dissertation topics and the structure of the interview. The first section included questions based on individual information about the informant, followed by a section devoted to CPCE as a term. The fourth section was focused on CPCE as an educational tool followed by a conclusion (Attachment 1). The time of the interviews was estimated to 30-45 minutes each. As the interview came to a conclusion the informant was thanked by the researcher once more for participating and contributing to the dissertation. If he or she would have liked to complement the interview further, this could be done by e-mail. The interviews were carried out in Swedish as the native language makes it easier to express opinions and thoughts (Johansson & Svedner 2006).

Prior to the focus group discussion, six students from Upper Secondary school was asked to participate in exchange for a cinema ticket. In preparation they were provided with the main topics. We started off the actual focus group discussion by welcoming the pupils, introducing the main topics, and explaining the term CPCE. The moderator continued by forming a discussion about the term CPCE, followed by CPCE in the classroom and as an educational tool. The discussion guide was used as a framework throughout the conversation (Attachment 2). The time of the focus group discussion was estimated to half an hour and it was carried out in Swedish.

3.4 Empirical Findings and Ethical Considerations

Findings relevant for the study were transcribed on computer while listening to the interviews and focus group conversation recorded on the dictating machine. Our findings were then analyzed and presented in the analysis and result section. Moreover, we categorized the answers of both interviews and the focus group discussion. As typological analysis implies, collected data will be set separated into categories based on predetermined typologies as they generate from common sense, theory and objectives (Hatch 2002). Through knowledge
gained from studying literature, the structure of the interview guide and discussion guide were formed. Using these structures, our typologies were already somewhat set beforehand.

A dissertation must be based on respect for those who participate, thus the participants will be informed about the dissertation purpose and interview structure, and about the fact that they can leave at any time during the interviews and discussion (Johansson & Svedner 2006). Furthermore, the participants’ identities were confidential and there is no information mentioned that could reveal the informants’ identity. Different names have been given to each participant in this dissertation and they have no connection with the informants’ real identity. We choose to name the male teacher who has been working for twenty-seven years at Upper Secondary school Ingvar. The female teacher at Secondary school is named Anna, the second male teacher at Upper Secondary school is named Erik and the third male teacher at Secondary school is named Juan.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

First and foremost, there is a need to consider the relationships between the informants and researchers (Hatch 2002). For the reason of convenience, we choose to interview teachers at the schools where we had our student teachers practise. As close relationships with the informants can affect the outcome (Hatch 2002), we first decided not to interview our tutors. Instead the interviews were supposed to be carried out with randomly selected teachers of English. However, since we only succeeded interviewing two teachers which we had no relationships with, two more interviews were carried out with our tutors, as the selection of teachers was somewhat limited. This can affect the reliability of this dissertation as the relationships are close. The relationships may also have affected the validity of the investigation. (Johansson & Svedner 2006)

While one of the interviews turned out inaudible, the interviewer took notes immediately after the interview had been conducted, and wrote down the main points the interviewee had given. The interviewee also offered to give his answers in written form, following the interview-guide, which was welcomed. However, as the written contribution differs from the conducted interviews, these results somewhat lessens the reliability, although it does not affect the validity of the investigation (Johansson & Svedner 2006)

Other aspect that might have affected the reliability of our research is that the interviews were carried out separately. However, both personality, setting and individual approach can differ and make the outcome imbalanced (Johansson & Svedner 2006).
4 Results and Analysis

In this section the collected data from our interviews and our focus group are presented in six categories. The first category begins with brief introductions of our interviewees, the focus group and their perceptions of CPCE. The second category is about CPCE outside the school setting. The third category deals with the teachers’ selection and assets of CPCE texts and materials used in the teaching of English. Category four presents how the teachers implement these materials in the teaching, whereas the fifth category deals with positive and negative aspects of the use of CPCE materials as a means to teach English. The sixth and final category treats the aspect of how the teaching of English has changed due to the changes in English as a global language. Quotations stated in this section are translated by the researchers into English.

4.1 Introduction of the Interviewees and the Focus Group

Anna has worked as a teacher of German and English for almost twenty years. Before she started her teacher’s education in her early twenties, she worked as a travelling agent taught English as a second language. During her studies she also taught night classes in English for adults. She has been working at the same school, with few exceptions through her entire professional career. She still finds teaching fulfilling, however, she believes the increased administrative work load is a downside to the profession. Anna believes that CPCE is culture that a great many people can take part of. Popular culture is something that is widely used and Anna finds that CPCE is mainly for young people. CPCE has to do with music, film and media such as news and the Internet. A main characteristic according to Anna is that popular culture is consumed by a great many.

Juan is bilingual. His parents are Hispanic and he grew up in Germany. He learned to speak Swedish entering Middle school and learned English at a slightly later stage. Juan teaches Spanish and English at the moment, while the number of pupils choosing to study German has decreased. He studied for seven years to become a teacher of English and German for Secondary and Upper Secondary school. He has now worked as a teacher for seven years at Secondary school and feels that he is ready to take on the challenge of Upper Secondary teaching. Juan defines CPCE as culture available to the general population. It takes forms as music, literature, media, sports and the Internet. CPCE is also the carrier of subcultures which young people identify themselves with. As CPC is in constant change Juan says that “what is considered popular culture today is not the same as what was considered popular culture a few
years ago”. Juan believes that different cultures are connected through media such as the Internet. He implies that young people living in one part of the world can share the same CPCE as young people in another part of the world. He claims that “people of the same age group, or participants of the same subcultures, have more in common than people simply being situated geographically close to each other”.

Erik works as a teacher of English and Philosophy at Upper Secondary school. He studied to become a teacher for four and a half years and has now been working for seven years. He is very pleased with his profession and he finds teaching stimulating and fun. Erik finds CPCE hard to define, but he states that the media plays a significant part in CPCE. CPCE does not only take forms such as music, film, literature and the Internet. He believes that the concept of popular culture is rather vague and broad. CPC does not only take the form of different texts, Erik claims that technical equipments such as computers, I-pods and cell phones are expressions of CPC as well. He further thinks that CPCE incorporates parts of adult culture as well as youth culture, parts which are easily forgotten. In conclusion Erik says that “CPC is what people find interesting nowadays”.

Ingvar is a teacher of English, Swedish and Philosophy at Upper Secondary school. He studied at the old teacher subject education in the 1970s. Ingvar has been working at Upper Secondary school for twenty-seven years. Ingvar defines CPCE as youth culture, he finds CPCE to be a vast concept and means that popular culture is something that people desire. In school, popular culture is very concentrated on youths. Popular culture is what the pupils recognise themselves in, in music, movies and texts.

The six participants of the focus group, three girls and three boys from Upper Secondary school, give their definition of what CPCE is, saying that popular culture is what is popular at present. The focus group concurs with the teachers, saying that CPCE takes forms such as music, film and is seen in different media sources such as the Internet.

### 4.2 CPCE outside the English Speaking Classroom

Anna and Ingvar both say that the influence of CPCE is noticeable in their pupils’ spoken English since they use phrases and vocabulary which they most likely will have encountered outside the school setting. Further, Ingvar refers to vocabulary that he believes his pupils have encountered through the genre of fiction and fantasy. Erik says that “CPCE is noticeable through his pupils’ use of different technical equipments such as I-pods and cell phones with speakers”. Erik and Juan say that pupils talk a lot about the CPCE they have encountered outside the school setting. However, they find that it is problematic for pupils to discussing
CPCE that they have met outside of school, since their vocabulary is not extensive enough. They have to switch to Swedish to make their point. This needs to be considered in the planning of discussions of this nature, according to Erik. Juan says that “my pupils float in and out of different subcultures and relate to the CPCE they meet outside of school in their written work”. Anna says that “at times I need to check up on some of the expressions and vocabulary pupils use to make sure it is correct according to British standards”. Whether or not she refers to American English or any other kind, she does not say. Anna believes that the amount of English her pupils learn inside her classroom is limited in comparison to the English they encounter and learn through TV, computers, music and other sources of CPCE her pupils meet outside of school on a daily basis. Anna takes notice of the enormous space the English language has been given in today’s Swedish society, saying that English is everywhere. Anna finds the CPCE pupils encounter outside the classroom noticeable in her pupils’ values and view of their reality. This becomes evident when pupils express opinions in discussions where they bring up things they have seen outside the classroom, such as reality shows and other popular cultural texts. When it comes to on-line computer games Anna feels lost, she has no experience and no inside knowledge of these matters. However, she is well aware that this is a source of English input for her pupils.

The negative aspects of CPCE constitute a larger problem in the materials found outside the school setting according to Anna. She disagrees with the amount of violence depicted in the CPCE her pupils meet outside of school. Juan finds that pupils sometimes have let CPCE influence their English language to a too great extent. What he means is that pupils adapt a language belonging to a certain socio-cultural group, unknowing of what this kind of language might signal to others.

In the focus group students discussed the matter of using different popular texts outside the school context, believing that if they were less exposed to popular culture, they would not learn as much English as they do now. They admit that the exposure to English on a daily basis make them somewhat comfortable in the English speaking classroom. However, they believe that they cannot learn for instance grammar by being exposed to CPCE outside the school setting, whereby the English subject is necessary. By applying different CPCE texts in school they believe they can learn the fundamental rules and structure of the language. Another positive aspect of being exposed to English texts outside of school is that they learn language fluency and features of the language such as intonation and useful phrases. In their leisure time the pupils of the focus group read English texts both on the Internet and in novels,
in addition they play computer games and watch motion pictures and they believe that they
can learn a lot from these activities.

4.3 The Selection of Texts and Material Assets of CPCE

Aside from the traditional textbook and workbook, the school that Anna works at has a
limited amount of teaching materials. They do not subscribe to any English speaking
newspapers or magazines due to financial limitations. The money first and foremost goes to
complementing and renewing textbooks and workbooks, without implying that these books
are updated. Left over money is spent on computer programs and other materials. Anna says
that “often we (teachers) spend our own money to buy authentic teaching materials such as
films, newspapers, magazines and books as we go abroad”. She expresses the need for greater
financial assets to improve the variety of teaching materials. Juan works at the same school as
Anna and has to work within the same financial constraints. Contrary to Anna and Juan’s
financial limitations, Erik finds that the assets of usable materials are good at his school. His
English department subscribes to a variety of newspapers and magazines in English, which
are incorporated in his teaching. If there is something else he needs in his teaching, all he
needs to do is ask. Ingvar who is a colleague of Erik’s says that “I do not keep track of the
materials at hand, since I do not work in the English department”. However, most of the time
he finds the materials he needs to teach and if there is anything he wants, other than the
materials at hand, he brings up what he wishes to purchase at the class conferences.

Music and film are the most common popular cultural features used by the interviewees in
the teaching of English. When working with popular music in their teaching, the interviewees
often let their students choose what lyrics to work with. Occasionally, the teachers choose the
lyrics by paying attention to what their pupils might like. Anna points out several times, that
she believes, that choosing materials that are appealing to her pupils will make them more
motivated to learn new aspects of the language.

Film is a common feature in all of the interviewees teaching of English. However, the
selection process takes different stands. Ingvar leaves the selection of what films to see much
to chance or his pupils’ desires. Anna considers her pupils preferences, although she tries to
choose films which her pupils have not seen previously in their leisure time. At times the team
of teachers, which Anna and Juan is part of, chooses what films to show pupils together. This
is especially the case during theme days, when the entire school is engaged in working around
a specific subject or theme. Anna repeatedly emphasizes that motion pictures of violent nature
and of “other inappropriate content” is not to be shown in school. Juan raises the same
concerns regarding content that might go against the grounds of values in school. Erik seems to have a somewhat different approach since he has shown films of such controversy as *American History X*, as a starting point for fruitful discussions. The AV-central¹ has a selection of films appropriate for educational purposes but as their selection, is somewhat limited, both Juan and Anna finds that there is a need to bring in other films, although Anna raises the concern of royalties. As a non-traditional source of motion picture, Juan has let his pupils work with film-clips from the internet site *YouTube*.

When it comes to popular literature Anna let’s her pupils choose freely, from the English speaking books at the school library. Erik and Juan choose which books to present to their students, taking into account their interests and language abilities. Ingvar, on the other hand, does a little bit of both.

All of the interviewed teachers concur that it is far more time consuming and demanding to work with CPCE materials than textbooks. Everything from the planning stage to the actual pupils work demands a greater effort from both pupils and teachers when working with CPCE texts.

When the pupils in the focus group discussed their previous experiences from Secondary school, one of the participants mention that a teacher that he had did not use the textbook at all. Instead the teacher brought in other materials to teach English, which was appreciated by the pupils. The participants prefer watching motion pictures in English in school as well as out side of the school setting. Watching movies during their spare time does however not make pupils reflect on the content which is asked for in school.

### 4.4 How Teachers Implement CPCE Materials in the Teaching of English

Erik often encourages his pupils to work on written assignments which bring in CPCE. These text can be about pupils’ favourite bands, computer games etc. He notices sometimes that his pupils are hesitant towards writing about these topics, not knowing that they are allowed to do this. From Erik’s point of view “teaching English is about getting pupils to work *in* English rather than *with* English”.

When they work with popular music, the interviewees’ pupils are sometimes asked to analyze the content of lyrics. However, Ingvar finds this exercise tricky and time consuming. Anna says that “occasionally I use popular music as listening comprehension, where my pupils are asked to fill in gaps in the lyrics”. Juan’s and Erik’s pupils are sometimes assigned

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¹ An institution which purchase, produce, lease and store teachers aids such as film and technical equipments. NE (2007), search word: AV-central. Found at: [www.ne.se](http://www.ne.se), found 071126.
to write their own lyrics. Anna uses popular literature such as contemporary youth literature approximately once every semester, followed by book reports that are, either written or orally performed to classmates. The other interviewees mention having their pupils work on written book reviews too. When she works with magazines for young native speakers of English, Anna often uses the “relationship pages” and asks her pupils to write responses to problems posed by people their own age. This is something that Anna claims is widely appreciated by her pupils. Anna and Juan find that magazine articles serve as a good starting point for introducing a new theme to the pupils. In addition, magazine texts can be used as a source for learning new vocabulary and useful phrases according to all the interviewees. Erik adds to this saying that articles make a practical source of short texts as they are easy to update. He finds articles one of the more easily manageable CPCE sources to work with.

The teachers use films and other types of motion pictures to discuss topics depicted, or as an introduction to a theme. Anna says “the discussions which follow are of different standards depending on how inspiring the pupils found the shown material and how well I have prepared them beforehand”. She finds that although weaker learners of English might have difficulties expressing their thoughts in the target language, they are affected by the shown content. Erik sometimes shows films as a reward for pupils. Anna disagrees with the use of film as a reward for pupils “I believe that showing film for amusement purposes only serves a valid purpose at the end of the semester when there is no use in engaging the pupils in something new”. She emphasizes the fact that motion pictures are not to be used as a means to fill out time.

Erik brings in computer games in his teaching as a means for discussion. He also finds that playing computer games is not as passive a source of input as watching film. Juan and Erik both agree that online-chatting is beneficial for the pupils’ language development.

Anna and Juan both bring up letting pupils produce their own film-clips. Anna hesitates to bring it up because she is not sure filmmaking is interesting from the point of view of CPCE in the teaching of English. Anna and Juan have just taken a course in film-making to enable pupils to make their own music-videos. They like the idea of letting pupils produce their own short films, commercials, music-videos, talk-shows and cooking shows, although Anna raises the concern that it is extremely time consuming and takes careful planning and smaller groups of pupils to make it feasible.

Anna cannot remember if any of her pupils ever made connections between the more traditional sources, such as the textbook and any of the CPCE texts Anna has brought into the classroom. She figures that her pupils might be too young and immature to make such
connections. Ingvar claims that those connections can only be seen if he points them out to his pupils. However, Juan and Erik think that their pupils make such connections on occasions. Erik concurs with Anna’s statement that some of his pupils might be too immature to make such connections although, what actually goes on in the individual pupil’s mind is hard to know. On the same note, Juan claims that such connections can only be made by the more mature pupils, while most of the pupils need help from their teachers seeing these patterns. This places high demand on the individual teacher to stay updated in the field of CPCE. In Juan’s opinion “all teachers should be offered in-service training in youth culture trough their careers”. Unfortunately, none of the interviewees gave any explicit examples of connections made by pupils.

The pupils in the focus group do not believe that CPCE is especially noticeable in the classroom setting. Popular culture is there to some extent, however, most of their teachers go by the textbook when they teach vocabulary, and that is not a good teaching method according to the participants of the focus group. Moreover, when it comes to learning the English language, mainly British English is taught in school. The participants of the focus group consider American English as less grammatically correct, as it entails a lot of slang. Pupils of the focus group say that their teachers, to a larger extent, use a British accent, whereas the motion pictures shown are mostly in American English. Some teachers speak English with a Swedish accent, referred to as Swinglish by the pupils of the focus group and a Swinglish accent is not preferable.

According to the pupils “popular culture is essential to make learning of English more fun”. It is common that teachers use texts from the 1700s, and that is just laughable” according to the participants of the focus group “more updated materials make learning more interesting”. The pupils in the focus group mention that when they practise listening comprehension by listening to audiotapes, it is somewhat difficult to understand language spoken with different English accents. At times they find the varieties of accents represented in these audiotapes too advanced and complicated to comprehend. However, they comprehend isolated words and the use of grammar, although, the conveyed meaning and context are hard to understand. Does this imply that there is a lack in variety of samples of different types of spoken English for an educational purpose?
4.5  Positive/Negative Aspects of Using CPCE Materials in Order to Teach English

All of the interviewees find the use of CPCE positive as it relates to the reality of their pupils’ lives. According to the teachers, CPCE touches the students, motivates them and makes learning more fun. These factors make the learning process easier for pupils. According to Erik and Juan, it is easier to work with CPCE texts, which interest the pupils. CPCE texts make it easier to bring in elements of language structure such as grammar. Juan emphasizes that by working with authentic CPCE materials he connects his teaching to the reality of his pupils, which is in line with what is expressed in the national curriculum. Anna claims that bringing in CPCE materials opens up for discussion of pupils’ own experiences and helps her to get to know her pupils better. Anna and Erik both find that film complemented with the English subtitles, serve as a dynamic source of input which enable their students to produce valid output. One interesting benefit of discussing motion pictures and film, according to Anna, is that she and her pupils often notice different aspects of what they have seen. These different aspects are proof of the fact that Anna and her pupils are at different stages in life and thereby value the same things differently. All of the interviewees believe that pupils are more likely to learn from CPCE materials and texts which they are familiar with, rather than texts they cannot relate to. The participants of the focus group are in agreement, saying that interesting content such as CPCE texts, makes learning easier.

Juan finds that a lot of the CPCE materials at hand, such as texts, music lyrics and film use a language which is not in line with what is to be taught in school. Another negative aspect which is expressed by both Juan and Erik is the fact that it is hard to stay updated as CPCE changes rapidly and feels “last year” in a short period of time. Another negative aspect is that it is hard to find suitable CPCE materials matching the pupils’ interests and varying levels of competence in the English language. However, both Erik and Ingvar point out the necessity of varying the content in the teaching of English since English is a vivid world language which their pupils will use on a daily basis in their adult lives. As oppose to the teachers, the pupils in the focus group find no negative aspects of using CPCE as teaching material.

At times when pupils are asked to, for example pick their own lyrics to work with, the content might go against the values of the curriculum. This is a problem according to Anna and Juan, who claims that individual discussions with specific pupils are necessary in these cases. It is a teacher’s mission to inform his or her students why certain texts are of an inappropriate nature, at least within the framework of school.
Although Anna uses CPCE texts in her teaching of English the school’s local plan does not bring it up. She claims that no specific teaching materials are brought up in the local syllabus for English. Instead, the documents only present a shallow description of how pupils are to practice the four language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. Juan on the other hand, who works at the same school, says that “the local syllabus brings up the matter of using CPCE such as newspaper articles and Internet sources followed by the teaching of critical literacy, which is important”. Juan believes that teachers in general need to become more aware and better at teaching critical literacy while the pupils need help sorting out which sources can be seen as reliable. Whereas Ingvar cannot recall anything specific being expressed about CPCE in the local syllabus, Erik claims that CPCE is not specifically expressed in the local syllabus, however, implementing CPCE in the teaching of English is implied if you read between the lines. Erik brings up what their local syllabus states about critical literacy. This is similar to what Juan said. The participants in the focus group mention critical literacy, saying that is important to value sources for learning since you cannot trust everything you read on the Internet, in papers and magazines.

4.6 How the Teaching of English has changed Due to the Changes in English as a Global Language.

Anna, Erik and Juan agree that languages are in a constant state of change, and consequently so is the teaching of English in the Swedish school. However, the teachers find it hard to keep up with the rapid changes of popular culture. The interviewees say, nowadays there does not seem to be as much of a focus on language structure and grammar as in the past. Ingvar thinks that” pupils these days need the same preparations for their future lives as they always have had”. By this he seems to imply that the teaching of English has not been affected by the extensive flow of CPCE in society. Juan adds that in the old days, English taught in school was modelled on British English as a role model as opposed to the more varied influences of English as a global language taught today.

Erik says that “in my experience, few teachers use their textbooks from page one and onwards, as it might have been used previously”. He continues by expressing that as school is supposed to prepare pupils for their adult lives, there is an increased need to implement the outside world in the classroom. According to Juan, the language has been affected widely by the increased understanding of different types of slang amongst pupils. On this note Anna says that “my pupils’ written language has changed due to their use of abbreviations and slang when communicating in on-line chat-rooms and when text messaging. Instead of writing ‘you’
they write ‘u’ in formal texts and write spoken language such as ‘gonna’ and ‘wanna’ instead of ‘going to’ and ‘want to’”. Other expressions such as ‘and stuff’ are commonly used in pupils’ produced work. This change, in the use of English, affects Anna’s teaching of the language. Anna can see a radical difference when she compares English to the teaching of German where her pupils do not get input outside the classroom. Anna believes that English becomes a more vivid language for the pupils since English is seen and heard everywhere in society. This also affects pupils’ learning in a manner that is hard to control.

The focus group stresses that it is important for the teacher to express the differences between slang and formal language since “uncorrected” language might lead to using language in an incorrect manner. The pupils need to learn the differences between altered contexts and what type of language is appropriate for a specific situation.
5 Discussion

The concept of culture, where the conception of popular culture serves as a branch, is a difficult subject to describe. All of our background sources such as Hobbs (2006), Persson (2000), Storey (2001) and all our informants agree on this matter. According to John Storey (2001), popular culture can be defined as culture that is well-liked among a majority of people. This notion is also agreed upon by all of the informants for this dissertation. An interesting approach in defining the expressions of popular culture is one of our interviewees comment about technical devices as part of the description of what CPC is. He takes into consideration the technical devices pupils use in order to consume CPCE. This approach is not part of the literature review.

According to Persson (2000), the differences in the definitions of the concept of popular culture, is likely to be vast among teachers and pupils. From the data we have gathered, the understandings of CPCE are very similar, comparing the teachers’ answers and the answers given by the focus group. We suspect that diversity might have been found if all our informants would have given more extensive descriptions.

In accordance with what is expressed in Lärmedlens roll i undervisningen (Skolverket 2006) about the need for teachers to stay updated regarding the rapid changes in society and the vast flow of culture that pupils meet outside the school setting, our interviewees concur. However, they express concerns, saying that it is almost impossible to keep up with these changes since the changes in CPCE are at all times ongoing. This is in line with what Persson expresses in his book Populärkulturen och skolan (2000).

In accordance to what Persson (2000) and the National Curriculum (Skolverket 1994) say about adapting teaching to the individuals’ experiences outside the school setting, our interviewees agree. Although the use of CPCE texts are not clearly stated in the Control Documents for the Swedish school, two of our informants claim that CPCE texts are incorporated in the local syllabuses for English. However, there seems to be disagreement between our interviewees. This might be due to how the interviewees interpreted the question posed by the interviewer.

As mentioned earlier, the National Curriculum does not give any guidelines for what to teach and how it is to be done. Nevertheless, the curriculum declares that there is a need of variation and creativity in teaching (Skolverket 1994), which is made by our informants by the use of different texts such as motion pictures, music, articles and literature. In the study carried out by the National Agency for Education (2006), teachers are asked to implement
examples of the texts previously mentioned. Textbooks, dictionaries and audiotapes are said to be the most frequently used material in contemporary education of English (Skolverket 2006). Some of our informants use contemporary popular music as listening comprehension and thus implement new materials by using the old audiotape method. In addition, our informants take their pupils interests and language abilities into consideration when choosing both music and motion pictures in their teaching. This is in agreement with findings of the study carried out by the National Agency for Education (2006).

According to our focus group participants, most teachers go by the textbook teaching vocabulary and practise listening comprehension using audiotapes. This is in line with what is said in Läromedlens roll i undervisningen (Skolverket 2006). The pupils prefer a varied content in the teaching of English and claim that the uses of CPCE materials in teaching are limited. Although the interviewed teachers agree that there is a need for variation, they raise the concern that working with CPCE texts is far more time consuming than working with the textbook. Hence, time is hard to find according both the interviewees and the study carried out by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket 2006). Could this be the reason why the pupils in the focus group claim to experience CPCE texts in school on such rare occasions?

Two of our informants agree that online-chatting is beneficial for language learning. Computer games are also taken into consideration but is time consuming to arrange for pupils in the school setting. However, it is common that teachers use computer rooms to carry out more diverse teaching (Skolverket 2006). The National Curriculum (1994) states that pupils encounter English in contexts such as when playing computer games and in online interaction, therefore, this should be considered in the teaching of English.

Persson (2000) advocates that pupils should achieve reflexivity between their experiences and culture consumption. According to the informants, pupils are not likely to make connections between cultural texts in school and those met outside of the school setting. The interviewed teachers agree that age and maturity of the individual pupil could be factors for why these connections are not made between CPCE texts met outside the classroom and the textbooks used in school. However, you can never be certain that they are not, as these connection can be made in silence or outside the school setting.

Experience pedagogy, as a method, promotes pupils to make connections between their own culture and reality and the cultures and experiences encountered in the school setting, however, it places high demands on both pupils and teachers (Persson 2000). One of the interviewees claims that pupils would be able to make these connections with the help from teachers. Teaching pupils to make parallels and to compare their own culture to the cultures of
others is stressed on several occasions in the syllabuses for English (Skolverket 2007). On that note, could it be that there is a need for teachers to educate their pupils further concerning their ability to reflect on cultural matters?

Hobbs (2006) states the need for critical literacy when incorporating CPCE texts as teaching materials. According to two of our interviewees, another aspect of CPCE is that the CPCE used as teaching materials in school are to be in line with the foundation of values, which implies that careful choices of what materials to implement in teaching have taken place as a part of the teachers’ critical literacy. However, teachers are not only to use critical literacy in choosing appropriate CPCE teaching materials, they are also to teach their pupils how to be critical towards the CPCE texts they encounter, both in and outside of school. This is stated by both Hobbs (2006) and Persson (2000). On this note, one of our interviewees expresses that there is a general need for teachers to become better at teaching critical literacy. The participants of the focus group express that consuming CPCE in their leisure time is done without taking a critical perspective. However, in their experience this is asked for in school. In addition, our interviewees express concerns in finding valid CPCE sources to incorporate in their teaching. Could this be yet another reason why teachers use sources of CPCE on such rare occasions?

Our female interviewee claims that she sees traces of values and reality perspectives that her pupils have applied to their own lives through the consumption of CPCE. Persson (2000) states that while CPCE texts are carriers of values and ideologies, teaching pupils to take a critical stand towards the CPCE text they encounter is of great necessity. However, this notion is not stated clearly by any one of the interviewees. Furthermore, all our informants agree that using CPCE materials as a means to learn or teach English, is generally positive. According to our informants, CPCE has the ability to motivate and touch pupils, make learning more fun as well as making the learning process easier for pupils. This in agreement with the study carried out by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket 2006).

Persson (2000) stresses the need for pupils to create their own CPC texts in order to achieve critical literacy and make the learning process more vivid. This is taken into account by our interviewed teachers, as they let their pupils produce CPCE texts such as video-clips and written texts.

Hobbs (2006) found that teachers are more likely to use motion pictures for fun and as a reward for good behaviour than for educational purposes. Our informants on the other hand, stress that they use this type of text to form assignments, discussions and to introduce new themes. Subtitles are not to be used unless they are in English, this as a means to enhance
dynamic learning and to prevent passive input. However, one of our informants admits using motion pictures to reward his pupils and fill out time on occasions, while another informant stresses that motion picture should not be used for those purposes.

All of the interviewees say that, the extent to which CPCE texts are used in the teaching of English seems to be determined by what kind of financial assets the teachers have to work with, and what amount of time can be put aside to plan and implement different CPCE texts. The research carried out by the National Agency for Education (2006) goes hand in hand with these findings.

Although our background section does not provide evidence of British English being the most common type of English taught in school, it is interesting to mention that the participants of the focus group believe that British English is to be considered the correct norm in school. While one of our informants seem to agree with this, saying that she sometimes needs to check if vocabulary and phrases in pupils’ use of English are correct by British standards, another interviewee says that the perspectives on what is to be considered as correct English has changed through the wider perspectives of English as a global language. On this note, the pupils of the focus group express the need for teachers to inform them about the difference in correct and incorrect written language use.

The lessons learned through the process of gathering data on the use of CPCE texts in the teaching on English take different characteristics. Time has been considered an obstacle as well as financial assets, which are variables we as researchers have encountered through our own experiences through student teaching. Furthermore, it has become evident that critical literacy needs to be given more thought in the school setting. Teaching pupils to take critical stands towards CPCE texts they encounter in both school and in their leisure time is of importance. The difficulties interpreting the National Syllabuses for English and implementing the National Curriculum in teaching have also become evident in understanding how to incorporate CPCE in the teaching of English. However, there is no doubt in whether or not CPCE is to be used in the school setting, while some questions of how still remain. There are no mistakes to be made concerning the complexity of the teacher profession, considering all of the different tasks aside from the actual teaching, which are expected from teachers these days. Although the implementation of CPCE materials in teaching may seem a small part of the greater whole, it is not to be neglected as it is of such great importance to the pupils in their ways of making sense of the world.

In addition to our research, we got to discuss popular culture briefly with Magnus Persson, researcher at Malmö University (071210), to gain a deeper and more contemporary view of
how he perceives popular culture in education today. He agrees that it is hard to define the term “popular culture”. The definition can depend on age group and what you as an individual refers to as popular culture. Persson also concurs that it is important to implement popular culture in education. However, he emphasis that popular culture should not be used as a substitute for what is considered traditional teaching materials or methods. Though it might be defined as two separate genres, one is not better than the other. Nevertheless, it is important to implement in education.

According to Persson, bringing in popular culture should not contribute a heavier work load for teachers and CPCE should not be as time-consuming as our findings advocate. Popular culture surrounds us in everyday life and therefore, it should not be difficult to find materials to use. However, Persson stresses that “using popular culture is not a magical recipe to gain motivation and interest from pupils, but it might be of help”.

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6 Conclusion

To conclude this study we will once more consider our research questions posed at the very beginning of this dissertation. At this point our findings have made it possible for us to give fruitful answerers to our area of interest.

We started off by asking: “How do teachers of English understand the concept of CPCE as a phenomenon?” The concept is hard to define as it implies many things. Nevertheless, there is an agreement that CPCE is culture that is well-likes among a majority of people. It contains film, music, magazines, literature, the Internet, video and computer games.

In addition, we asked: “How do pupils of English understand the concept of CPCE as phenomenon?” They interpret the concept in a similar manner. Popular culture is culture that is appreciated by a lot of people. It contains film, music and the Internet. Media also plays a significant role as a part of popular culture.

Furthermore, we asked: “How do teachers of English implement CPCE in educational settings?” This, of course, resulted in an extensive range of findings as there are numerous ways in which different teachers go about implementing CPCE in their teaching. The most frequent CPCE material used in the teaching of English is motion pictures. They serve as topics for discussion, for introducing themes and writing assignments, but also as entertainment for the pupils. Other materials used for implementing CPCE in teaching English are magazine- and newspaper articles, music, the Internet and contemporary literature.

Moreover, the question: “How do teachers of English view possible benefits and downsides in the implementation of CPCE in their teaching?” was of interest. There is no doubt that using CPCE as educational material is a positive method in the school setting. Pupils have a tendency to become more inspired, motivated, interested and amused when these types of texts are used in the English classroom. However, conducting assignments and exercises based on CPCE are both time consuming and the CPCE texts can sometimes be unreliable, hence, the need for critical literacy.

In addition to the teachers’ perspective we posed a final question: “How do pupils of English view possible benefits and downsides in the implementation of CPCE in the teaching of English”. According to our representation of pupils, they only saw positive aspects of using CPCE as a means to learn English. Moreover, they concluded that there are no reasons why teachers should not use CPCE in the classroom, as it is more motivating and fun to learn English when the text used is interesting.
6.1 Further Research

In conclusion, we have the same suggestions for further investigations in this field. One of the reasons we, as researchers of this dissertation, took an interest in CPCE, was due to the language traces of CPCE we had encountered in our pupils’ use of spoken and written English. In agreement with that notion, two of our interviewees express how they see the same traces of a language learned outside the school setting. A suggestion for further research is thereby to examine to what extent the use of language likely to have acquired outside the school context influence pupils’ language use in the school setting.

Another area for further investigation is how teachers can help their students, in discussing matters of interests to stick to the target language. This is a problem brought up by our interviewees. Finally, democratic issues considering the choice of teaching materials could be of interest as pupils would like to have more texts related to popular culture in their education. Our findings somewhat indicate that teachers do not use CPCE materials to the extent that pupils would like them to do.
7 Table of References

Literature


Skolverket (2006) ”Engelska” Läromedlens roll i undervisningen p. 63-94


Electronic Sources


Introduktion:

- Vem är jag?
- Vad skriver jag om i mitt examensarbete?
- Intervjuns struktur
- Uppskattad intervjutid
- Jag kommer att använda en diktafon.
- Resultatet av intervjun kommer att presenteras anonymt.

Personlig information:

- Vad undervisar du i?
- Vilken utbildning har du?
- Hur länge har du jobbat som lärare?

Arbetsplatsbeskrivning:

- Hur ser tillgången till material ut på er skola?

CPCE som begrepp:

- Hur skulle du definiera populärkultur?

Användning av CPCE I klassrummet:

- Vika typer av populärkulturellt material använder du i din undervisning?
- Hur går du till väga när du väljer ut ditt material?
- Vilka positiva aspekter kan du se med användningen av populärkulturellt materiell i klassrummet?
- Vilka negativa aspekter kan du se med användningen av populärkulturellt materiell i klassrummet?
CPCE som ett undervisningsverktyg:

- Vad säger er lokala planering om att implementera populärkultur i undervisningen?
- Hur använder du populärkultur i din undervisning?
- Vilken effekt kan du se hos eleverna?
- På vilket sätt uppdagar sig populärkulturen eleverna tar till sig utanför klassrummet i undervisningen?

Avslutning:

- Eventuella tillägg
- Tack för din medverkan!
Examensarbete i engelska
Diskussionsguide - Fokusgrupp

Introduktion:
• Vilka är vi?
• Vad skriver vi om i vårt examensarbete?
• Vad är CPCE?
• Diskussionens struktur
• Uppskattad diskussionstid
• Vi kommer att använda en diktafon.
• Resultatet av diskussionen kommer att presenteras anonymt.

CPCE som begrepp:
• Hur skulle ni definiera populärkultur?
• Vad vi menar med populärkultur.

Användning av CPCE i klassrummet:
• Vad lär man sig av populärkulturen när det gäller engelskan?
• Vilka typer av populärkulturellt material på engelska används i undervisningen?
• Kan ni beskriva några positiva aspekter med att använda populärkulturellt material på engelska i undervisningen?
• Kan ni beskriva några negativa aspekter med att använda populärkulturellt material på engelska i undervisningen?
• Kan ni se möjligheter att i skolan använda mer av de texterna (filmer, spel, Internet, tidningar) ni använder på fritiden?

CPCE som ett undervisningsverktyg:
• Hur används populärkultur på engelska i undervisningen?
• På vilket sätt känner ni att det bidrar till inlärning?
• Har ni nytta av den engelska populärkulturen ni tar del av utanför skolan i undervisningen?
Avslutning:

- Eventuella tillägg
- Tack för er medverkan!
- Dela ut biobiljetter.
Förberedande information till dig som ställer upp för intervju.

Vi vill först och främst börja med att tacka för din medverkan i vår undersökning, det du bidrar med är av mycket högt värde för vår undersökning. Vi vill också försäkra dig om att dina uppgifter kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt, vilket innebär att din identitet inte kommer att kunna utläsas ur vår uppsats.

För att underlätta intervjuns för både dig som respondent samt för oss som intervjuares, kommer nedanstående text behandla de temaområden du förväntas reflektera kring.

I vårt examensarbete använder vi oss av begreppet CPCE (Contemporary Popular Culture in English) vilket refererar till samtida engelskspråkig populärkultur. Vi intresserar oss för hur utvalda engelsk lärare använder sig av detta fenomen i undervisningen, samt vilka effekter ni kan se av detta. De övergripande teman som kommer att behandlas är:

- CPCE som begrepp
- Att använda CPCE i undervisningen
- CPCE som undervisningsverktyg

I den inledande fasen av intervjuns kommer du även att ombedjas att ge en bakgrundsbild av din lärarutbildning och yrkesverksamma tid. Intervjun uppskattas ta maximal 60 min att genomföra. Skulle du känna efter intervjuns att du har mer att tillägga mottager vi gärna dessa tilläggskrifligt via mejl till adresserna: malingustafsson1981@hotmail.com eller linnrix82@hotmail.com

Vi vill återigen tacka som ödmjukast för din medverkan!

Mvh/
Malin Gustafsson samt Linn Rix,
Malmö Högskola; Lärarutbildningen KSM