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"The Internet is Watching You"

Why and How George Orwell's *1984* should be taught in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Title: The Internet is Watching You **-** Why and How George Orwell's *1984* should be taught in the EFL Classroom.

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Abstract: This essay will argue for why and also how the book *1984,* by George Orwell should be used in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Teaching authentic literature from various periods of time is an important part of the EFL education according to the syllabus for Swedish schools. However, the teaching of classic literature can often be found stale and unapproachable. If literature is integrated in the lives of the students, it becomes more approachable and exciting, and consequently the students are more likely to take it in, according to the sociocultural teaching theory. In today's IT society, computers and the Internet has a big part in most young people's lives, and are a subjects they can easily relate to. This essay, shows how *1984* can successfully be used in EFL education to compare Orwell's dystopian vision about a controlling surveillance state with today's IT society's use of social media, Internet history, targeted advertising and so on.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language education, the filter bubble, Integrating literature, Loss of privacy, manipulation, Sociocultural teaching theory, surveillance.

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1. Introduction

This interdisciplinary essay presents a literary analysis of the novel *1984* by George Orwell, comparing Orwell´s dystopian vision of a totalitarian surveillance state to today's information society. Focus is on how this comparison can be used in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom as a way of integrating the literature in the students' own lives. The main argument is that George Orwell's novel *1984* is as relevant today as ever, and can therefore be used to teach English according to the curriculum as well as to the sociocultural teaching theory.

1984 is set in a future London where dictatorship and totalitarianism has become a way of life where liberalism and the ability to think for yourself and create your own beliefs have not only disappeared, but are completely forgotten. Big Brother and The Party, as the government is referred to as, are omnipotent a position they have secured by surveillance, control and constant lies and manipulation of history, facts and events. Orwell himself fought in the Spanish Civil War and lived through the Cold War. He saw how tyranny and totalitarianism affected the world and how the Spanish newspapers not only blatantly lied about the war, but reported things that had not even taken place. When he then witnessed Soviet propaganda do the very same thing he feared that liberty and objectivity were becoming things of the past, and these experiences and fears are what inspired and fuelled *1984* (Gleason, Goldsmith and Nussbaum 73-75).

"***Big brother is watching you***" is the theme of George Orwell's book *1984,* written in 1948, and it has also become a much debated subject in today's society, which is why the book would make an excellent tool in education. This is so partly because it is a classic and the language in itself can be a great tool for learning, but more importantly as the book would make a great foundation for interesting discussions. *1984* could easily be used to compare Orwell's vision about the Big Brother state and its Thought Police with today's use of social media, Internet history, targeted advertising and so on. Young people today are constantly reachable and many aspects of their lives can be seen on Facebook, Twitter and other social media. The sociocultural teaching approach my essay relays on, clearly shows that knowledge never is an isolated phenomenon but always part of a historic and cultural context (Dysthe 34).

Often literature in secondary school education is presented as something the students *have* to read but it is often unclear to the students *why,* as they can not see a relevant connection to society or their own lives. I will argue for why and also how the book *1984* by George Orwell

should be used in the English classroom. By integrating literature not only in the education but in the everyday lives of students it becomes more approachable and more interesting, and consequently the students are more likely to take it in.

1.1 Theories

Surveillance, loss of privacy and manipulation

Orwell's vision of a totalitarian, surveillance state where every move is monitored has not come true, but we are closer to it today than before. By accessing our Internet history the government can follow our movements, and companies and web pages collect information and data about everything from our demographics, to our credit history and film preferences.

Another aspect of the information society is the loss of privacy. Many IT (Internet Technology) experts, such as Daniel J. Solove, Simpson Garfinkel and Evgeny Morozov, are concerned about how the expansion of the Internet is threatening the privacy of the individual. In *1984* the citizens are taught to love Big Brother and embrace constant surveillance and complete lack of privacy, as a way of life. Today, we willingly and without much consideration provide various Internet companies, web pages, social media and online chat forums with our information, locations, pictures, personal details, and even inner thoughts and feelings. In *1984* the purpose of watching and manipulating citizen was purely to gain political control and power. Today, however, media and the Internet have become a clever way of advertising and marketing and is mainly a tool to control the market.

Nevertheless, the resent and increasing personalization of search engines and webpages offers the possibility of manipulation. When we turn on the computer there will be tailor-suited adverts and Google search suggests pages it believes that we would be interested in. Internet activist Eli Pariser talks about "The filter bubble" which means that our Internet history governs our future Internet use. By using our previous searches a website algorithm selects the information we are fed with to accommodate our presumed interests. This way the user does not get the whole picture but a picture that confirms its previous perception. This way we stay isolated in our own bubble where we are constantly reaffirmed. Consequently, if we live in a society where certain values and viewpoints are the norm our chances to break these norms are limited (Pariser chapter 4). I will apply Pariser's concept of "the filter bubble" to *1984*, in order to make comparisons between the filter bubble and the futuristic society presented in the novel.

The sociocultural aspect

There is also a clear pedagogical aim with comparing *1984* to today's information society. According to the sociocultural teaching theory, knowledge is a social construction that is created in the interaction and exchanging of thoughts and ideas with others. Meaning, that knowledge is not something that can be acquired solely from reading, listening or individual work. The sociocultural theory states that we learn best when we work together, and interact with each other. It is also essential that we can relate to and identify ourselves with the subject. "No matter what specific theme one is studying it is crucial that the object of analysis is not only the individual separately but always takes into account the individual in her sociocultural environment[1]" (Dysthe 32). We learn from our surroundings and social context. This is also clearly stated in the syllabus for English in secondary school; *"The education should utilise the outside world as a resource for contacts, information and learning, as well as contribute to students' development of an understanding of how to search, evaluate, choose and acquire the contents of different sources for information, knowledge and experiences"*[2] (skolverket).

Although not all pupils may be able to afford mobile phones, computers or I-pads, and therefore not use them in their private life, they still encounter these things in school and life. Whether they choose to or not they are all part of the information society.

Teaching literature

It could be argued that the language in the book *1984* is too difficult for young adults as it was written over 60 years ago, and has difficult words and phrases. However, if this is handled appropriately it could be a positive thing. Learning new words and reading English from various periods is educational as well as part of the English syllabus; " In the education students shall encounter spoken and written English of various types and also get to put the contents in relation to their own experiences and knowledge[3]" (skolverket).

The importance of teaching literature in the EFL classroom is recognized by many scientists in the EFL field. Philip K.W. Chan says in his article *Literature, Language Awareness and EFL,* that the texts often presented in textbooks are simplified in language and style and therefore not entirely authentic. To create deeper understanding students need to be working with texts in their original form, rather than with texts that do not offer any alternative meanings but simply presents a situation and do not require any further

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[1] Author's translation
[2] The author's translation
[3] The author's translation

contemplation (38-50). The importance of integrating literature with the student's own experiences is not only a requirement in the English syllabus in Sweden but as Collie and Slater, prominent EFL experts, claim literature should not be purely memorized and learned by heart, as it has been traditionally in Europe, but it requires a genuine engagement and interest (Gilroy and Parkinson 214).

1.2 Previous research

Comparing *1984* to today's IT society has been done before, for example by Richard A. Posner, Simpson Garfinkel and Daniel J. Solove and Evgeny Morozov whose works I will be using as background research and refer to in my essay. However, these works are often very specific and rather complicated. Whereas, my aim is to put the comparison into a wider scope and focus on young people's relation to the digital era, as well as how this can be integrated in the EFL classroom education. Orwell's *1984* is often seen mainly as an objection to the socialistic totalitarianism of the time, and it was written with this purpose (Gleason, Goldsmith and Nussbaum 73-75). This essay, will analyse the tools used to acquire this control and put them in relation to the possible effects of our Internet usage.

Of course, there are many books that could make for interesting discussions and using *1984* in the classroom has been done before and is therefore far from a groundbreaking idea. Still, with the ever expanding technological IT society the book has become more relevant than it was only a few years ago. The media usage of young people in Sweden between ages 15- 24 is 6.75 hours a day on average, and Internet represents almost a third of it (Nordicom). They consider Internet to be their most important source of information (Findahl). Therefore this is a subject that can not be overlooked in secondary school education.

Approach of this essay

The original review of *1984* in the *New York Times* 1949, interpreted the novel as a display of Orwell's indignation with the concept of totalitarianism as well as his dislike of many of the aspects of socialism, but most importantly it was seen as a warning of the destruction of individuality. "[…] we are ourselves swept into the meaning and the means of a society which has as its single aim the total destruction of the individual identity" (netcharles.com). This diminishing of privacy and individual choice in comparison to today's IT society is what this essay looks at, using a theory of literature as way of raising current issues in society. It also looks closer at its didactic purpose since it, as explained above, is essential to find a way to combine the literature taught in school with the outside world of the students.

One can argue that there also many differences between Orwell's dystopian vision and the society we live in today, and that this essay poses rather an extreme comparison. Nevertheless, there are similarities and it is important to raise awareness of those and the effects of our Internet usage. As a teacher I will not attempt to tell the students about their world and how they should live in it, I simply aspire to shine a light on the fact that we live in an IT society and that this fact and its consequences did not spring out of nothing but could – to a certain point – be foreseen.

1.3 Essay structure

The first chapter, "Privacy in *1984* and the 21st century", will focus on George Orwell dystopian vision about the death of privacy compared to today's IT society. I will also show how this can be integrated in the EFL classroom and put into practical lesson examples.

The second chapter, "Manipulation in *1984* and the 21st century", will compare the brainwashing and altering of reality done by the government in *1984,* to the "filter bubble" theory and the use of Netspeak. I will also show how this can be integrated in the EFL classroom and put into practical lesson examples.

The third chapter will look closer at the similarities and differences between Newspeak and Netspeak, and how this can be integrated in the EFL education.

The final chapter, "*1984* in the EFL classroom", will show how and why *1984* should be used in the EFL classroom by relating the contents to the social and cultural context that the students live in.

2. Privacy in *1984* and in the 21st Century

In this chapter I will look at how George Orwell dystopian vision about a totalitarian surveillance state, where the citizens have no privacy and Big Brother feeds them biased information, can be compared to today's IT society and integrated in the EFL teaching. The questions I attempt to answer are; how has the relevance of the book changed from when it was written? Have we with our constant Internet usage created a new *1984*? Has Orwell's vision come true? How can the outside world and the classroom world work together in symbiosis? There will also be lesson examples of how these theories can be applied.

2.1 Integrating Literature in the EFL Classroom

In her book *Literature as Exploration,* Louise Rosenblatt writes about the importance of teaching literature in the EFL classroom. She especially emphasises the importance of working together with the students to integrate the literature in the students own reality. She claims that it is essential to create an environment where the students stimulate each other, exchange thoughts and work together towards a fuller understanding of the given text or literary work. The teacher's role is to lead the students to a deeper involvement of the meaning of the text, which according to Rosenblatt means that the student critically re-evaluates his or hers own assumptions, opinions and interests. The teacher can only contribute to this process if he or she understands what forms the students' reactions and what *they* find important. For the teacher to be able to do this she needs to understand some of the most important aspects and worries of young people in today's society (Rosenblatt 73). In order to be prepared and willing to give life to the literary work, the reader need to be able to relate it to his or hers previous experiences and interests (76). This is why I have chosen to look at Orwell's classic from a modern perspective and focus on the similarities between loss of privacy and manipulation. If it is not put into a relevant context *1984* can be a rather difficult and even tiresome read, and the student may struggle to give it life.

Rosenblatt's views on teaching literature go hand in hand with the practises of the sociocultural teaching theory that is based on the idea that we learn best when we together with others discuss things that are interesting in our own lives (Dysthe 32).

However, previous conceptions of a subject can potentially not only aid but also narrow the reader's mind as he or she already has an opinion of the subject (Rosenblatt 74). Therefore group discussions where ideas and opinions are being exchanged and discussed are essential. It is also important to acknowledge that in a complex subject like this there is no given

answer. Bo Lundahl, university lecturer in the science of education, agrees with Rosenblatt and claims in his book *English Language Didactics* that the EFL teaching of literature should be spent on attempting a different sort of understanding of a text, where there are no correct answers but rather various possibilities. This is enabled by the students reflecting on and reacting to the reading material (263). It is therefore important that the teacher raises questions about the subject, rather than supplying answers. My aim with this approach to teaching *1984* is to make the student to contemplate the fact that they live in an IT society and that their internet behaviour *can* be observed and recorded.

Bo Lundahl, as most contemporary teaching experts, emphasises the sociocultural perspective on reading and says that how texts affect us depends on our environment both inside and outside of school; "The interaction between the learner and the social context is dynamic and changeable and at the same time the social context is an integrateble part of what is happening. Learning can therefore not be separated from its social context (205-206).[4]" Looking at *1984* in comparison to the IT society is a way to achieve this correlation between learning and its social context.

2.2 Surveillance and Loss of Privacy

"Big Brother is watching you". In *1984,* George Orwell describes a society where the government keeps their citizens under constant watch and continually gathers information about its inhabitants. Privacy expert Daniel J. Solove writes in his book *The Digital Person – Technology and Privacy in the Information Age* that we are becoming a society of records. He talks about *digital dossiers*, referring to a digital collection of data about each and every individual (1). Our choices of newspapers, doctors, lawyers, credit card companies, employers and so on are all in a record - not held by us but by third parties. Data about us is continuously collected from web companies and web pages and so on, and put together; these records are of interest to the government to detect illegal activities such as fraud and drug dealing, but also to find out our religious and political beliefs. Solove claims, that the Internet has the potential to become one of the government's greatest tools for gathering information. The government can request an ISP (Internet Service Provider) to keep logs of an individual's emails, to whom they are sent and what the contents of them are. The government can also get hold of information about us, such as our favourite films, travel destinations and daily appointments from certain web pages (Solove 168 -70). In *1984,* The Party has The Thought Police whose

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[4] Author's translation

main agenda is to interpret their citizens' personal views, beliefs and even thoughts. They do this by planting agents everywhere, and by making the citizens watch each other. Today, the computers do that work for us.

Winston, the protagonist in *1984,* distrusts Big Brother and the way of living that this totalitarian state enforces and he gradually grows more and more rebellious and therefore joins the brotherhood, an order that aims to overthrow Big Brother and The Party. His lover Julia, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Big Brother can not be overthrown, but that the best way to defy the party is to secretly break the rules and leave it at that. Despite this conviction, her love and dedication to Winston makes her join him in his quest for truth and justice. Their eventual downfall is that they choose to trust Mr Charrington, an elderly shop keeper, and the seemingly rebellious, inner-party member O'Brien, who both turn out to be members of the Thought Police and working for The Party. When Winston finally is caught and taken to the prison cells within *The Ministry of Love*, O'Brien tells him that they have been watching him for seven years and he knows not only of Winston's movements but also his secret thoughts and diary entries (Orwell 256-261). "There was no physical act, no word spoken aloud that they had not noticed" (289). These days, we feed our computers all sorts of information about ourselves on a daily basis often without knowing, or considering, the fact that the government or a third party could get hold of that information. In many aspects this resembles Orwell's vision, although the methods of gathering information vary. In *1984,* The Party had to get inside Winston's apartment to access his diary. In the 21st century, however, the government can request this information from a third party, such as an ISP, social media site or web company, without ever stepping foot inside our homes.

The idea that the government can access our personal Internet history without a subpoena or justified reason may seem unrealistic, but in reality it is a fact that is often hidden in plain sight. For example, the MSN privacy policy states the following:

> […] We may access or disclose information about you, including the content of your communications, in order to: (a) comply with the law or respond to lawful requests or legal process; (b) protect the rights or property of Microsoft or our customers, including the enforcement of our agreements or policies governing your use of the services; or (c) act on a good faith belief that such access or disclosure is necessary to protect the personal safety of Microsoft employees, customers or the public. We may also disclose personal

> information as part of a corporate transaction such as a merger or sale of assets. (Microsoft)

The reality is that Internet sites, such as MSN, can disclose our personal information not only to the government but also to other web companies. Although this does not apply to *all* web companies, and those that can do this may still choose not to, it is important to know what we actually sign when we tick the *terms and agreement* box. Especially, considering that on an average day young people in Sweden, between the ages of 15 – 24, use Internet 6.75 hours a day and the majority of this time is spent on email, chat forums, social media and YouTube (Nordicom 2009). All of these forums encourage the users to submit personal information about themselves, and to many people they function as a forum where you can speak intimately with friends or even as a form of diary keeping. In *1984*, this information about citizens is used by the solely government to control the citizens and thereby maintain power. Whereas, in the 21st century this information is not only of interest to the government, but also to companies who want to control the market. For any company the Internet can be a tool not only to reach customers but to figure out the best way to get through to them.

In the book *Database Nation – The Death of Privacy in the 21st century*, Garfinkel, an IT expert concerned with Internet security and privacy, believes that one of the reasons for the growing loss of privacy is the rapidly growing technological advances that sometimes make it hard for even an expert to keep up and realise what effect it has on the individual's privacy (6). "We stand at the brink of an information crisis. Never before has so much information about so many people been collected in so many different places. Never before has so much information been made so easily available to so many institutions in so many different ways and for so many different purposes" (Garfinkel 70).

The question is what all this information is being used for. In *1984*, it is stated that technology only advances when the products can be used to diminish or take away human liberty (Orwell 201). Solove makes the connection between digital dossiers and the control state featured in *1984*. He points out, that the current collection of data on citizens can enable a social control by the government that takes on certain totalitarian features (175). Another risk he believes is that the loss of privacy and anonymity causes us to be more careful and limited in our actions. Consequently we become discouraged from expressing our religious and political beliefs, if they do not concur with the general opinion in the society we live in. Solove makes the conclusion that today's society suppresses our democratic right of free thought and right to express it, much like Big Brother does in *1984* (176 -177). Jurist and

legal theorists Richard A. Posner, on the other hand, who compares 1984 and the effect of the Internet in his article *Orwell Versus Huxley: Economics, Technology, Privacy, and Satire,* claims that Orwell's vision was far from correct, and that the society we live in today is nothing like the one Orwell predicted. Posner believes that Internet has a positive effect on freedom and can help create democracy. Unlike The Party the Internet was not created with the purpose of controlling citizens, but rather to enlighten and inform them. Despite this Posner acknowledges that its invasion of privacy can potentially do the opposite, as the right to freedom is also the right to freedom of thought: Solitude (not complete isolation, but enough private space to enable a person to think for himself) fosters individualistic attitudes; conversely, the constant presence of other people, or sense of being under constant surveillance, enforces decorum and conformity (Posner). Evgeny Morozov, technology researcher, also confirms this fear in *The Net Delusion.* Morozov believes that the awareness of being watched, but not knowing how and when, can make many activists censor themselves or refrain from risky Internet behaviour altogether (145). This description of the potential presence of a higher power that is watching you and the consequences of this aptly captures the essence of *1984*:

> There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and except in darkness, every movement scrutinised. (Orwell 4- 5)

In *1984* the citizens know that they may be watched at any time, therefore they live as if they are. Today, those who are aware of the potential surveillance nature of the Internet may also live as if they are being watched and alter their Internet behaviour thereafter.

According to Orwell the key to the successful totalitarian state in *1984* is that it, unlike previous governments, had the ability to monitor its citizens 24 hours a day, a process that had been enabled by the media such as newspapers, radio and television. "With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end" (214). The telescreens, in the book, are able to both transmit and receive - not entirely unlike today's computers. Orwell

foresaw this specific way of using technology as the death of privacy, and it seems that many current IT theorists are inclined to agree with him.

2.3 Working with this Theme in the EFL Classroom

I will give a few examples of how to continuously work with *1984* whilst reading it. The lesson plan is divided in to the three main themes that I focus on in this essay. The second and third theme will be treated in the next part of the essay. The reason for treating them separately is because they are quite big and complex, and should therefore not be rushed through.

   The teacher introduces this theme by talking to the class about surveillance and privacy, in today's IT society. By beginning the class with open questions about how often the students are on the Internet, on which forums, and what information they share there, the teacher can then easily direct the discussion to what they know about surveillance and privacy on the Internet. By talking about the research done by privacy experts, such as Solove, Garfinkel, Morozov and Posner that are mentioned in this essay, the introduction will take on a reflective and thought provoking form.

   In this exercise the class will be divided into couples, and the teacher will give one fragment of the book to each student in the pair. The students will first read the fragments individually and then make five questions to what they have read. They then switch texts and questions with their partner, and read the other fragment of the text and answer the questions their partner has come up with. This is often an effective way to highlight what the students find important, and worthy of discussion in the passage (Collie and Slater 42). There are many parts of *1984* that would be suitable for this exercise. However, I suggest working with part of page 214, quoted on page 11 in this essay, where Orwell talks about the possible dangers of the development of media such as radio and telescreens that can both receive and transmit. The other fragment could be from page 4-5, quoted on page 11 in this essay, when the consequences of being aware of that you may be watched at any time, is treated.

   After having read and reflected on the above suggested fragments individually and then in pairs, the class will be divided into groups of four or five and given the questions about the fragments they've read to discuss. Here are some examples of how these questions could look; why did Orwell see the advancement of technology as the death of privacy? What makes the telescreens especially dangerous according to Orwell? How can technology aid totalitarianism according to Orwell? Is there, in your opinion, any truth to Orwell's

predictions about technology's effect on privacy? How can the knowledge of being watched affect one's behaviour? Is there a difference between being watched all the time or only some of the time but without knowing when and how? Are there any similarities between the telescreens and the Internet? If so what are they? Are there any differences between the telescreens and the Internet? If so what are they? Compare Orwell's theories about surveillance with your own lives; are there any similarities or differences and if so what are they? The aim of letting them discuss these particular questions is to get them to begin to think about and compare Orwell's dystopian predictions about the loss of privacy and privacy in today's IT society.

Working with the context of the book can be done in many ways, but it should encourage a lot of different activities and offer practice in skills such as reading, speaking, writing and listening (Collie & Slater 36). I chose this approach, inspired chapter by four in *Literature in the Language Classroom,* as all of those skills are included. By reading the passages individually first the students will get a chance to make their own opinion of the text, and then by coming up with five questions about the context they will have to attempt to make sense of what they read, when answering their friend's questions they will also have to look at the text from someone else's perspective. The pair and group work will require them to practice their listening skills.

3. Manipulation in *1984* and in the 21st Century

Are there any relevant similarities between the manipulation done by Big Brother in *1984* and the one we are subjected to every time we go online? In order to answer this I will look at the aspects of the book that can be related to the student's lives, such as the use of Google and Facebook. There will also be lesson examples of how this can be used in the EFL education.

In *1984*, the constant surveillance and collecting of data is not the only weapon to control its citizens but the ability to use this information to brainwash citizens and vastly limit their view of as well as knowledge of, the world is equally important. This is done by constantly showering the population with propaganda and altering news, facts and events. For example, The Party claims that infant mortality has gone down with almost 50% since they took power, but there are no records to prove whether this is true or not (Orwell 78). Sometimes, they more blatantly change the truth from one day to another, like first saying that chocolate ration was *decreased* to 20 grams and then claiming the next day that it had been *raised* to 20 grams (61-62). By only presenting their picture of the world The Party and Big Brother manage to uphold the impression that the world is the way it should be. Eli Pariser, Internet activist and IT expert, writes in his book *The Filter Bubble – What the Internet is Hiding from You* about a phenomenon called the filter bubble, which means that we as Internet users are often without our knowledge, being not only monitored but also manipulated.

One example of how this is being done is how the popular search engine Google customises its searches after the user. Since December 2004 Google, unnoticed by most, personalized their search engine. This means that rather than showing all users the most authoritative or relevant web pages, it will show each user the one it believes is the most suited for his or hers personal interests and views. For example, should either an environmentalist or an oil magnet write 'climate change' in the Google search window, the results will differ immensely (Pariser 1-3). Journalist Andreas Ekström also warns of how this has the potential to vastly limit our information intake, as 89% of all Internet searches in Sweden are done through the Google search engine and 95% of users do not look further than the first ten hits (Ekström). The social network Facebook operates in a similar way; it will choose which of your friends' newsfeeds you will see, and what adverts may appeal to you. The top 50 Internet sites, such as CNN, Yahoo, MSN and others, have several hundreds of ways to personalise your search, and then if they wish they can forward it to other web pages that can benefit from it.

Another likeness between *1984* and the IT society, is the way technology can be used to interpret the populations' personal views, beliefs and even thoughts. The telescreens in Orwell's *1984* can at any time record you and your smallest facial movement and any inclination of discontent can be observed and interpreted (Orwell 4-5). Today our text messages, Facebook updates, messages and emails can be analysed to tell good days from bad ones, and sober messages from drunken ones, in order to find out our current mood and state of mind (Pariser 121-22). "While Gmail and Facebook may be helpful, free tools, they are also extremely effective and voracious extraction engines into which we pour the most intimate details of our lives"(Pariser 6-7). In the police state in *1984* the aim was to control the citizens, whereas in today's market oriented society the aim is often to sell us things. Facebook's privacy policy states, that the information given about you and your friends will be used to provide you with the adverts and information most suited to your interests (Facebook). In practice, this means that they tailor-suit their adverts in such a way that if you mention coffee a lot in your updates you will see adverts for teeth whitening and if you want to lose weight, you will be subjected to adverts for various weight loss programs. However, this information about us and those we associate with could potentially be a powerful tool to influence us in our more vital decisions, such as who to vote for or what to believe in. The fanatic Big Brother upholder O'Brian tells Winston that power is being able to control human beings and their minds. The party's aim is not to destroy their enemies, but to convert them (Orwell 267 - 277).

In *1984* censorship is an essential measure to withhold information from the people and maintain the belief that they act in the best interest of the people. Today, in the Western World most countries do not use censorship. Though, this does not necessarily mean that we as Internet users see all aspects of a situation. "In polls, a huge majority of us assume search engines are unbiased. But that may be just because they are increasingly biased to share our own views. More and more, your computer monitor is a kind of one-way mirror, reflecting your own interests while algorithmic observers watch what you click" (Pariser 3). This is similar to the contortion of facts that Orwell himself experienced and feared would be a constant in the future (Gleason, Goldsmith and Nussbaum 73-75). The masses will never revolt against oppression if they are unaware of the oppression in the first place; as long as they have nothing to compare their situation to they can not become aware that they are oppressed, or that something in society is amiss (Orwell 216). By constantly reassuring us that the world is the way we see it; we may see no reason to question it, by customising our

searches Google and other search engines, intentionally or not, lull us in to a false sense of security.

This limitation of information as well as lack of awareness of the outside world is the main theme in *1984.* Telescreens run by the government control all news feed and party members, such as Winston, work with altering history and events in a way that fits the regime's agenda. With no other views than the current one presented to the public the citizens are unlikely to revolt. In *1984* the regime alters the news, whereas today search engines and social media narrow it and form it to fit our previous perception of the world and how it should be. In *1984*, no opposing news or opinions are allowed to exist on record; any piece of news that contradicted the one currently held by the government was thrown into and swallowed by so called "memory holes" (Orwell 40). Today, in Sweden all perspectives and opinions on a subject can be found on the Internet but we may not see it as we are in our own bubble, where we are constantly reaffirmed and told that the world is just the way we see it or want to see it (Pariser chapter 4). As the Internet is the main source for information for young people in Sweden (Nordicom) this can create a narrowing of the information and news flow, rather than the ideal widening of information, that Internet has the ability to supply us with.

By personalized web searches important news or angles can be bypassed, as the computer algorithms assume that we would not find them interesting; instead it will show us something it believes is more suitable based on our Internet search history. In *1984* Julia, Winston's lover and partner in crime, hates the party and all it stands for, but the idea of an actual revolution is beyond her imagination, as she knows only of the party and the way of living it enforces. Julia, who is younger than Winston, has grown up with Big Brother, and she has only seen one possible version of the world and therefore other potential versions are outside her sphere of knowledge or, as Pariser would put it, outside her filter bubble. Orwell warns of constant alteration of fact and history and Pariser of constant reaffirmation.

3.1 Working with this Theme in the EFL Classroom

As there is no need to complicate things more than necessary, I suggest the same setup as with the first theme. Again the introduction should be based on open questions, this time about what search engine they use, which search results they look at and what adverts and webpages appeal to them and why. The teacher will then move the discussion to personalised web pages and the "filter bubble" theory.

This time the students could be given one part of the text from pages 267 - 277 of *1984,* were O'Brian tells Winston that power is being able to control human beings and their minds

and that the party's aim is not to destroy their enemies but to convert them. The other fragment will be from page 216 where the dangers of only being presented with one view of the world, are discussed. As in the above exercise they will write five questions about the text they have been given and then swap with a friend and after reading the other fragment and answering the questions they will be divided in to groups for further discussion. Here are examples of questions for these parts of the text: why are the masses unlikely to revolt according to Orwell? Why does the party want to control the human mind? What are the possible dangers of not seeing all sides and aspects of a situation? Can you see any similarities or differences between the "filter bubble theory" and the society in *1984*, and if so what are they?

Here the aim of letting them discuss these particular questions is to get them to begin to think about and compare the narrowing of information in *1984* to the filter bubble and personalized webpages and adverts in today's IT society.

4. Newspeak and Netspeak

Are there any similarities between the Newspeak and Netspeak? What separates the two? In order to answer this I will look closer at these two forms of languages. I will also show why and how it could be used in the EFL education.

One way to limit the worldview and the citizen's ability to think for themselves in *1984* is the use and promotion of Newspeak[5], the official language of *1984*. Newspeak contains only the words absolutely necessary to go about your everyday life, and leaves no room for imagination. As a work colleague of Winston describes it; "Don't you see that the whole aim of newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought crime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it […] every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller (Orwell 55)." Today we have Netspeak[6], a way of communicating online by using abbreviations, symbols and a limited vocabulary. The aim of Netspeak is mainly to communicate efficiently online and there are many different variations of Netspeak, depending on which Internet forum is being used. Netspeak can also be used as a way for young people to communicate in with each other without being understood by adults (noslang).

Relevance

There are, of course, many books that are relevant to young people in the modern society, and topics such as gender roles, sexuality and identity are gradually and rightfully growing more important to integrate in teaching and learning. However, technology and communication are also subjects that can not be ignored as they are becoming a rather dominating part of young people's lives. "The new communication ways affect how we learn, and the computer, the Internet and the mobile phone have meant enormous changes to how we relate to writing, reading, communication, information search and storage of information[7]" (Lundahl 70). Lundahl believes that it is important that the teacher is not only aware of these new elements in the students' reality but that he or she has an important role as a catalyst that uses and encourages creative usage of these technological tools. However the teacher should also be aware of and bring up possible negative effects. The teacher has the difficult job to take in the

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[5] In *1984,* Newspeak is the language promoted by the state, it is closely based on English but it is reduced and simplified in order to discourage alternative thinking.
[6] Netspeak is way of communicating with shortened words, numbers and symbols, often used in chat forums and text messages in order to save space.
[7] Author's translation

students' current knowledge and interests and combine these with her own abilities to help them utilise and transform this knowledge into new insight (Lundahl 70-73). This approach to teaching can also be seen in the sociocultural teaching theory, which is based on the idea that the most beneficial learning arises from our own interest and experiences. By meeting the student at their level in their worlds and then take it a step further, we can create new meaning together. Lundahl also acknowledges the important role texting and chatting have in young people's lives. These employ their own language that is quite separated from the school world, and the text forms the students encounter there (73). By comparing Netspeak with Newspeak in the classroom, the students will be analysing their own chosen text forms by using the more classic form of literary work. This way the two different worlds may come a little bit closer and work together.

Comparison

Newspeak's function is primarily to invent new words as well as omitting surplus words, such as many nouns, verbs and adjectives. Synonyms and antonyms too are seen to lack justification according to the principles of Newspeak. One word is enough to describe something and if one wants to express the opposite it can be done in the word itself. When applying this principle bad would become "ungood", and instead of using other words to express that something is not only good but excellent "plusgood" or "doubleplusgood" are equally efficient. As Winston's colleague Symes expresses it; the whole notion of goodness can be covered in one word (Orwell 54). Newspeak is created with the purpose of not only limiting the number of words, but also to limit the emotions and thoughts of people. The idea is that without the word to express certain feelings or opinions those feelings and opinions will seize to exist. Netspeak, on the other hand, has the main purpose to shorten a message and thereby speed up the interaction. Despite the vast supply of different smileys that encourages the expressions of feelings Netspeak can become rather limited, as the same words and expressions are often used. As one of its purposes is for young people to communicate in a language that adults do not understand, Netspeak can also be seen as a rather rebellious language. In that way it differs from the uniform and limiting Newspeak

Nevertheless, both Newspeak and Netspeak were founded on the English language, though the result is often unrecognisable to the untrained eye. The following sentence is mainly made up of Newspeak and refers to a speech where Big Brother is said to be at war with Africa, which now is no longer the case and therefore the speech needs to be rewritten; "times 17.3.84 speech malreported Africa rectify". Another example is; "Reporting bb dayorder

doubleplusungood ref unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefliling" (Orwell 40-41). "In Oldspeak this might be rendered: the reporting of Big Brother's order for the day in the *Times* of December 3rd is extremely unsatisfactory and makes references to non- existent persons. Re-write fully and submit your draft to higher authority before filing" (Orwell 47). Netspeak consists mainly of abbreviations and acronyms as a way to shorten the sentences (Wikipedia). Some examples of this are; **"Ddg"** which means **"Drop Dead Gorgeous"**, **"n2br"** which means **"not to be rude"**, "na4w" which means "not appropriate for work" , "cu2nit" which means "I will see you tonight" and "afaicr" which means **"As Far As I Can Remember"** (noslang.com)[8]. So to illustrate: an expression of grave discontent with a situation in Netspeak could look as follows: tarfu **(**acronym for Things are really fucked up) and in Newspeak: status doubleplusungood (meaning things are really very bad).

Both Newspeak and Netspeak were initially spoken by a small initialised group and then spread to the population and is gradually growing more and more common in everyday life. Why then teach literature from the 20th century and in its original form, when Netspeak is becoming more and more usual, one might wonder. The answer is that the aim of EFL is for the students to be able to communicate in various situations, read different types of texts and get around by using their English (skolverket). This is most successfully achieved by reading texts in their original form as intended by the author, rather than in shorter and simplified versions. "The language development of both teachers and students can be best supported in a context where 'a continuum of texts including of all kinds of examples of creating and purposeful play with the resources of language needs to be presented" (Chan 38-50). Therefore *1984* is an ideal book as the language is creative and the topic relevant as well as thought provoking. Additionally, looking at the English language and how it changes over time and generations is a good way to evoke interest in the language.

4.1 Working with This Theme in the EFL classroom

The students will read pages 53-56 in *1984,* that concerns and explains the purpose of Newspeak. In groups of four to five they will then discuss and compare Newspeak to Netspeak – the language they use themselves when texting, chatting and communicating online. This can be done by looking at the grammatical structures of Newspeak and Netspeak and comparing them, by trying to translate a regular sentence into Newspeak and Netspeak or

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[8] There are many different variations of Netspeak; it can vary between computer enthusiasts, gamers, different chat forums and social Medias. These are only some examples of the language that can be used to communicate with on the Internet.

comparing the purpose of these ways of communicating. The purpose of this exercise is again to put the context of the book in relation to their own lives, but also to reflect over the use of the English language in a more fun and approachable way than is usually done. Authentic literature should help the learner extend its awareness of the range of language itself (Collie and Slater 5).

5. *1984* in the EFL Classroom

This chapter will contain more lesson plans and practical examples. I will demonstrate how and why *1984* and its message can be discussed and analyzed in class as well as in a written essay.

5.1 Creating Meaning Together

The sociocultural teaching perspective sees learning mainly as a social phenomenon. Lundahl argues that the ground for the communicative classroom is that conversation, reading and writing are not considered as separate entities but as intertwined factors that work together. By talking and writing about what we have read we create new angles and topics for discussion (Lundahl 144). Therefore most lessons should be planned in such a way that the main part will be devoted to conversations and discussions in groups or pairs. The teacher's role in group discussions is not to dominate the conversation but steer it, formulate goals and clearly state what is expected of the students. It is also the teacher's task to help the students see the context, draw conclusions, further their reflective abilities and to awake an interest for both the language and the contents of the material (Lundahl 153). With this in mind I have structured the above and the following lessons examples as a way to work with *1984* in the EFL classroom.

5.2 Practical Lesson Examples

By working mainly in pairs and groups the students will have to interact with each other. This will help them develop and challenge their understanding which is in line with the sociocultural practise, and it will also demand that they use various English skills such as reading, talking and listening. There will also be an individual written assignment, which will be the end task of working with *1984* and will be a way for the students to sum up their thoughts and reflections after discussing and re-evaluating their perceptions of the subject.

One has to start somewhere and when it comes to a book with such a complex story and message as *1984,* I suggest that one starts from the beginning.

Working with the first chapter

The students will be asked to read the first chapter, whilst reflecting and attempting to answer some questions regarding that particular chapter. The class will be divided into two groups. Depending on whether they belong to group one or two, they will be given a different topic and different questions. The topics chosen from the chapter are discussed in this essay, the

students from the first group will work with "surveillance and loss of privacy" and the second group with "manipulation". The students will answer the questions individually at first and then tell someone from the other group about their conclusions. Here are examples of questions to give to the first group: what kind of society does the protagonist live in? What is the purpose of the telescreens? Who/ what is Big Brother? Who/ what is The Thought Police? Here are examples of questions to give to the second group: how does Winston, the protagonist, feel about Big Brother? How does he express those feelings? Why is Winston writing a diary? Why does Winston fear he will be shot in the neck?

After reading the first chapter and reflecting over the questions individually, the students will work in pairs of two – consisting of one person from group one and one from group two- and tell each other about their results and then together discuss them and their meaning. Rather than just skimming through the book, this approach encourages them to reflect on the content and discuss it together. I have chosen to divide the chapter into two different topics, and assign to each individual in the groups one of the subjects. By retelling to each other what they have read they will get an introductory understanding of the society portrayed in *1984,* and the lives and conditions of its citizens.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary can be dealt with in various ways, but here too I suggest approaching it from the student's perspective. Just handing out a glossary list with words the teacher believes the students needs to learn, is rarely a good way of working with vocabulary. After all it is the students and not the teacher that should benefit from these exercises.

The students will therefore work in pairs and pick out ten words and phrases that are new to them, look them up and present them to the class. Each pair will be assigned a different part of the text. This is a simple and effective way of finding out which words and phrases the students find difficult, rather than the teacher making assumptions on their parts. By letting them present and explain the words for the class they will also get to practise to their spoken English.

Written essay

After reading *1984* with regard to either the whole book or selected parts, depending on how much time there is, the students will write an essay concerning the society presented in *1984* compared to the society they live in and their everyday lives, taking both similarities and differences into account. Examples of how this could be done are: comparing Newspeak to

their own chat language, comparing Facebook to the Thought Police or the Internet with telescreens.

The previous work and group discussions will work as a foundation for this essay. Doing individual written assignments is also something they will encounter in the national tests. This task aims to get the students to put their reflections and thoughts into words. This way, they get the chance to create an understanding of the book and its message through interaction with others before putting it down in their own words.

The syllabus for upper secondary school in Sweden describes knowledge as something that comes in a variation of forms and expressions - as facts, skills, previous knowledge and experience - all of which interact with each other, and teaching should therefore attempt to incorporate them all. The lesson plans above are examples of ways to incorporate this perception of knowledge in the EFL classroom.

5.3 Why *1984*

Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater, the authors of *Literature in the Language Classroom*, acknowledge the potential of using authentic literature in the EFF classroom; "[…] though its meaning does not remain static, a literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to the reader in another country or a different period of history" (3).

Rosenblatt says that although the reader does not necessarily have to have exactly the same experiences to find the literary work enlightening, he or she will need to share certain needs, emotions and circumstances (75). "When a specific literary experience is shaped, what the student brings to the text is as important as the text itself[9]" (76). This is why *1984,* interesting as it may have been when it was written in 1948, needs to be put into a more modern context. When living in an IT society where technology shapes our everyday lives and decisions, looking at *1984* from a 21st century perspective will make it more accessible. Additionally, understanding its meaning today and having a basic knowledge of the fears that inspired it students may also find it easier to understand its meaning and message in the 1940's. Therefore I focus mainly on the similarities between Orwell's dystopian vision and today's IT society, as even though the differences are important to take into account they may not evoke the same understanding. If we lived in a society where surveillance was non-existent, privacy a given and no person, company or institution ever attempted to influence our personal decisions discussing *1984* in the classroom would be not be as relevant.

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[9] Author's translation

The school has the important task to raise democratic citizens, teach democratic values, satisfy the students' right to influence and participation as well as enable the development of democratic competence (Skolverket 5). By comparing the totalitarian features of the government in *1984* with the possible effects of the IT society where surveillance and manipulation are becoming more and more accepted and the language gradually changing, the students will have to reflect over what democracy is and what makes a democratic society. This way of looking at Internet behaviour and its consequences may seem rather extreme or exaggerated in the eyes of the students, but it is a way to raise interest and I hope that this will lead to interesting classroom discussions. There are of course also many differences between Orwell's dystopian vision and today's IT societies, as pointed out by Posner. However, I have chosen this approach as I believe it is essential to create an awareness of the *possible* effects of our internet behaviour and that of young people in particular.

The approach suggested to teaching *1984* in this essay combines the sociocultural teaching approach, the integrated use of authentic literature, the demand to teach democracy as well as the guideline in the English syllabus in Sweden to teach different variations of English and utilise the outside world as a platform for learning.

6. Conclusion

Orwell himself pointed out that *1984* was not an attack specifically on the English government, but that London was purely the setting, and the book was meant as a warning that this dystopia, if not fought against, could happen anywhere (Hitchens 85). Orwell meant that the issue was not whether justice would prevail, but rather *whose* justice that would be (Hitchens 95-96). The methods used to control the information flow today and in *1984* differ, but the results are in some ways similar. In *1984,* censorship is essential and the citizens of England only know of one possible way of living and behaving. In the 21st century, all Swedes have the opportunity to access an endless number of different news reports, and share their opinions and experiences with millions of others all over the world. However, the vast majority of young adults only consult their first ten Google search results, and Google as well as the increasingly popular social media sites aim to purely feed their users articles and adverts that concern their previous recreational as well as political interest. Consequently, there is a very real risk that only one world view or one justice, as Orwell puts it, becomes dominant.

In Swedish schools the education shall be based on democratic values and human rights such as the sanctity of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, everyone's equal value and right as well as solidarity between humans (riksdagen). In order to live up to this important and difficult task, these values have to be treated and discussed in class and integrated in the education. The discussions about *1984* presented in the essay focus primarily on the freedom and integrity of the individual, with the aim of not only teaching English Literature in an accessible way but also to shine light on some of the core values of democracy.

The use of authentic literature in the classroom is also being promoted by EFL experts, as it offers a variation of language as well as treatment of current issues and of human nature that inspires reflection that is often hard to find in textbooks especially made for the purpose of teaching. As shown in this essay, modern education science acknowledges the fact that interaction and communication is the key to successful learning. The above mentioned Lundahl, Dysthe and Rosenblatt are amongst those that advocate this approach to teaching. When it comes to EFL education this becomes even more important as the aim is to learn not only how to read and write but how to communicate in a foreign language. Therefore, most of

the lessons examples of how to teach *1984* in the EFL classroom illustrated here are group exercises with emphasis on practising and developing communicative skills.

In the syllabus for English as a subject in Swedish upper secondary school knowledge is considered a construction between the two worlds – the school one and the outside one and it is the schools role to successfully combine these two worlds. By looking at an authentic work of English literature from the viewpoint of the outside world of the students, and incorporating this in the education, I believe I have accomplished this.

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