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Postcolonial Literature in the Language Classroom

– An interdisciplinary study of why and how teachers should use postcolonial literature such as A Small Place in the Swedish language classroom.

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Title: *Postcolonial Literature in the Language Classroom – An interdisciplinary study of why and how teachers should use postcolonial literature such as A Small Place in the western language classroom.*

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Abstract: This thesis is inspired by my own experiences with the lack of cultural diversity in teachers' choices of English literature in the upper secondary language classroom. The essay is going to highlight teacher's tendencies of neglecting postcolonial literature. Furthermore, this essay aims to problematize the imbalance in the choices of authors and books used when teaching postcolonial literature. My argument is that the western canon and authors tend to dominate literature lessons and students seldom get the opportunity to familiarize themselves with not only postcolonial literature, but postcolonial literature written by "*the other*", that is, authors from former colonies.

In this essay, I conclude that teachers need to broaden their horizons when choosing books to teach in the language classroom. Through extensive reading of Jamaica Kincaid's essay *A Small Place*, the goal is to illustrate how teachers can challenge the canon and also to discuss the many benefits of including postcolonial literature by writers who might offer a different version of historical events than the standard Western version. It is worth mentioning that the goal is not to claim that authors from former colonies are to be preferred when teaching postcolonial literature. My suggestion and conclusion is that teachers should revise and question the canon and come to terms with the fact that variation is key in the language classroom for better learning outcome.

Key Words: Postcolonial literature and theory, language classroom, writing back, the *self* and *other*, Eurocentric hegemony and Eurocentric education.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

Reading literature is a crucial and yet entertaining process that has many general advantages for an individual. One of the benefits of reading is that it is a convenient way of gaining knowledge about the world. Accordingly, literature is of great significance in language teaching because it enables people to enlighten themselves with regard to historical and worldwide events, which otherwise would have been gained through a time-consuming process. In language development, reading is also vital for students because it makes it possible for them to expand their vocabulary as well as practice analytical skills. Furthermore, reading improves general language skills, such as becoming more articulate and improving writing skills.

With the advantages of reading in mind, this interdisciplinary essay aims to highlight a neglected genre of literature in the English language classroom, that is, postcolonial literature written by authors from former colonies. The main focus is therefore on the importance of broadening horizons and taking a stance against Orientalism (Said, 1977) by choosing postcolonial literature whereby authors from former colonies get the opportunity to give a representative and justified version of *the other*¹ and to define colonialism and imperialism from the perspective of the natives. The main arguments of the essay are based on the theories of Orientalism. In his influential book *Orientalism*, Edward Said states that “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident” (Said, 1977:2). Orientalism inhabits a long tradition of the distinction between the orient (the East) and the occident (the West) based on the political notion that considers the West to be superior to the orient, which in its turn was a way of justifying the Western countries’ domination, cultural and political authority over the Orient.

The ideas behind Orientalism are of high relevance to this essay because Western authors and the teaching of postcolonial literature² have played an important role in sustaining Orientalistic ideas that reproduce oppressive and undermining

¹ I have chosen to use the “*the other*” for convenience reasons despite the fact that the term itself is problematic and contributes to the stigmatization of the natives. Using a synonym would risk losing important and relevant connotations that “*the other*” contributes to this essay.

² In this essay I distinguish between postcolonial literature by Western authors and postcolonial literature by authors from former colonies but the overall criteria for the recommended literature is that the source is reliable and gives an honest account of former colonies.

social relations. The ideas of Orientalism, similarly to other political ideologies, influence authors and literature that in turn are taught in Western schools. For this reason, this essay will also problematize Eurocentrism and the Eurocentric perspective in the Western school system (Tesfahuney, 1999:67). The aim is to illustrate the importance of familiarizing students with literature written by *the other* and literature that is less likely to have been tainted with Western imperialistic values or ideologies like those of enlightenment. Challenging the canon is supported by Mekonnen Tesfahuney (1999) who maintains that Western education plays a big role in the reproduction of hegemony, global hierarchies and inequalities. Tesfahuney discusses monoculturalism and how European education contributes to the reinforcement of hegemony in the sense that it favours and is heavily influenced by the domination of a certain group, that is, white, male, and middle aged (1999:67).

Additionally, Tesfahuney explains that the reason behind the unfair nature of European education is derived from undemocratic ideologies of enlightenment that advocated racism, sexism and nationalism (1999:66-67). According to Tesfahuney the dilemma within the European education system is that it excludes other groups as it tends to have the domineering group as its target group. As a result, those who are not part of the domineering hegemony are disadvantaged and are unlikely to succeed in Western education. Tesfahuney also points to the reasons behind the inequalities in the Swedish system by providing numerous studies that have analysed Swedish pedagogy, syllabuses and books taught in schools between 1980 and 1990. One of the studies mentioned by Tesfahuney was by Lena Olsson (1986) that concluded that there is a tendency of preferring certain nationalities or cultures over others and that these tendencies show no signs of declining. Another study mentioned by Tesfahuney is from Maj Palmberg 1987. Palmberg's study went further as to conclude that colonial ideologies could still be found in Swedish school books. Especially, concerning Africa, the same study showed that colonial ideologies were still included in books taught in schools and as a result showed a flawed Eurocentric perspective of historical events.

With these facts in mind, this section is an attempt to address the importance of what sort of postcolonial literature students in Western schools should be exposed to, a point often overlooked by teachers while choosing postcolonial literature. The significance of reflecting on the author's possible intentions and eventual effects of the book seem to be a trivial matter in teaching in the Swedish schools. In my

previous school experience, having observed that there is lack of a postcolonial literature from the natives' perspectives from teachers when choosing books to teach. In this essay, I therefore argue that there should be more culturally and historically diverse literature in the language classroom than there is today. My claim is that it is important for teachers in Western countries to challenge the canon and break the current tendency of only including Western literature and neglecting literature from other parts of the world. Diversity and variation are ideal so as not to expose students to books that favour certain perspectives when dealing with a sensitive subject such as colonialism and its consequences.

1.2 Previous Research

This section of the essay puts emphasis on other critics' writings about Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* and others' attempts to incorporate the book in literature teaching. Since this is an interdisciplinary essay, others' experiences of using the book in teaching literature will also be discussed. The goal is to give an insight to some possible implications of working with the essay.

Understanding Jamaica Kincaid and her style of writing is understanding that she is an author that does not hide her own views, regardless of any possible consequences. This is made evident in *Understanding Jamaica Kincaid* by Justin D. Edwards (2007:4), who writes that the author was once fired from *Art direction Magazine* for writing a controversial article. It is therefore worth mentioning that Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, was not as well received as her previous work. Many critics and reviewers of the book slated the essay for the rhetorical strategies that the author uses. According to Edwards, an editor of the *New York Times*, Robert Gottlieb, "refused to publish it [*A Small Place*] because he felt that the essay expressed too much bitterness and anger" (2007:8). Many reviewers of the book apparently shared Gottlieb's interpretation of the book, with some critics going as far as claiming that the book was "distorted by [Kincaid's] anger" (2007:8). One particular critical reviewer of the book for *New Statesman and Society* wrote a review that is of interest for this essay and the attitude detected in the review will be discussed later in the essay. The reviewer wrote that "Kincaid loses control of her material, and inexplicably descends into a snivelling attack on the sins of the nasty-and long departed-colonial power" (Edwards, 2007:8).

On the flipside, some reviewers were more positive towards both the book's prose and content. Many praised it, maintaining that it was an urgent essay that conveys an important, yet difficult, truth about history. Salman Rushdie's review contained praise, mainly on the effects of the callous tone and not so finely controlled language that Kincaid uses. Edwards quotes Salman Rushdie's praise on the language in *A Small Place* as being "a jeremiad of great clarity and force that one might have called torrential were the language not so finely controlled" (Edwards, 2007:8).

Using *A Small Place* for pedagogical purposes has been done before by the likes of Rhonda D. Frederick and Lindsay Aegerter. The different outcomes of their experiences with teaching the essay are very interesting aspects that teachers need to be aware of before introducing the essay.

In "What if you're an Incredibly Unattractive, Fat, Pastrylike-fleshed Man?" (2003) Rhonda D. Frederick, a professor in Caribbean and African-American studies gives a detailed account of her experiences when she incorporated *A Small Place* in her introductory Caribbean literature course. She states that one of her objectives was to extend students' knowledge about the Caribbean, that there was more to the Caribbean than tourism. Moreover, Frederick states that she hoped her students would be open to a different perspective that would lead to them being able to "interrogate their own Western worldviews, and to foster a recognition of the workings of oppression". Even though the reading process ended well, as a response to the book, Frederick states that the students were "angry, defensive, or otherwise closed to Kincaid's text" (2003:2).

Frederick also mentions Lindsay Aegerter who also documented her difficult experiences in incorporating the essay in language teaching. Like Frederick, Aegerter experienced resistance towards the book and "confesses to being worn out by mainstream students' less-than-positive responses to *A Small Place* and similar texts..." (2003:2). As a solution to this, Aegerter, integrated pre-reading assignments that address colonialism, racism and exploitation in preparation for not only the issues that are discussed in the book but also Kincaid's provocative style way of writing.

1.3 Jamaica Kincaid and *A Small Place*

A Small Place is an essay that was published by Elaine Potter Richardson under the name Jamaica Kincaid in 1988. Richardson was born in St. John's, Antigua in 1949. According to Justin D. Edwards in *Understanding Jamaica Kincaid* (2007), Richardson decided to legally change her name to Jamaica Kincaid in 1973. Interestingly, "changing her name was, as Kincaid says, a liberation that gave her freedom to write whatever she wanted. She also states that she chose this name because it reflected her complex identity as a Caribbean woman who was marked by a British colonial educational system" (Edwards 2007:2).

Additionally, the motivation behind the choice of first name was apparently inspired by the English corruption of the original naming of the Island of Jamaica, thus, "Xamayca" by Columbus. The reason behind her choice of the surname Kincaid was that it is a common surname in English-speaking countries. The combination of the two names served as a new identity in her newfound life in the United States of America. According to Edwards, Jamaica Kincaid's name was an attempt in the process of "remaining", thus, staying connected to her Caribbean roots and colonial experience. Edwards defines "remaining" as a process whereby *the other* or people from former colonies use different strategies to remain connected to their countries and colonial past (Edwards, 2007:2).

A Small Place is an essay about a former British colony, a small island called Antigua that is located in the West Indies. The book deals with Antigua being a former colony, a tourist resort and a country that has been affected by neo-colonialism. Throughout the essay, Kincaid discusses the aftermath and the never-ending repercussions of colonialism and exploitation of her country by Western powers. The book is divided into three parts in which the author motivates her views and justifies her resentment towards globalization, exploitation, tourism and colonialism. Her argument is that no country possesses the right to colonize and exploit another for its resources. Moreover, Kincaid expresses disappointment in what could be seen as modern day colonialization through the tourism industry, whereby wealthy tourists from Western countries show imperialistic tendencies of entitlement to Antiguan resources. Furthermore, the writer also addresses her

dissatisfaction with the current Antiguan government's corruption and exploitation of its own people.

One aspect that plays a big role in the book and differentiates *A Small Place* from other postcolonial literature is the unusual, but exceptionally brilliant, rhetorical techniques and strategies that Kincaid uses in the essay. Although writing about a controversial subject, such as the politics of colonialism, the writer is unapologetic about where and on whom she lays the blame for imperialism and colonisation of, not only, Antigua but other former colonies in for instance, most of Africa. Ultimately, she holds imperialists accountable for the Antiguan downfall and failure to recover from colonialism. Her unapologetic way of writing enables her to write in a confrontational manner in which she generalises and categorises her readers any way she deems fit. The effects of Kincaid's stylistic strategies are discussed in depth in the upcoming literary analysis of the essay in Chapter 3.

1.4 Method and Material

This essay is based on both literary and pedagogical theories in language teaching. Firstly, the literary theory part focuses on problematizing teachers' choices of books in the western language classroom. My arguments are derived from a criticism of the kind of postcolonial literature about natives by authors from former imperialistic countries and Western canon being viewed as the norm in teaching literature.

In the literary part I have also chosen to recommend Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as an example of an essay that teachers can use to integrate literature that is less than canonical but equally important as the classics to discuss and teach. Through the close and extensive reading of the essay, I have accumulated motivations as to why I specially recommend teachers to use this particular text. The practical strategies of teaching it are outlined in the chapters that examine the pedagogical and didactical aspects of this essay.

The personal choice to teach postcolonial literature and the ethical implications of it were taken into consideration in the initial stages of the essay writing process. It was important to recognise possible pedagogical and didactic implications in teaching *A Small Place* and how students would react to the essay. One reason behind my reluctance in my choice of book is the ethical implications of introducing an approach and literature that is open to different interpretations and controversy.

The ethical implications of the generalisations of Westerners that are made by the author in the book have therefore been taken into consideration throughout the essay. Depending on their backgrounds, students might identify with either the former colonizer or former colonies. As a result, the students might not appreciate the generalizations made in *A Small Place*. Some students might become resistant to the book due to Kincaid's confrontational tone towards Westerners. It is reasonable to assume that some students could interpret the book as an effort to impose guilt for Western countries' exploitation of other countries. This could potentially lead to students' resistance towards reading the text.

Admittedly, there was a sense of reluctance and hesitation in choosing the text even though the Swedish syllabus clearly enlists as one of the subject's aims that "students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (Skolverket, 2013:1). Based on the previous requirements and expectations of the Swedish school syllabus on teachers, it was clear that the advantages of the postcolonial approach and exposing students to the essay outweigh the disadvantages regardless of *A Small Place's* controversial nature.

1.5 Essay Structure

The first section deals with previous research on teaching literature by Jamaica Kincaid. Additionally, this part will shed light on other teacher's experiences of teaching *A Small Place*.

The second part will focus on the reasons why it is essential to teach *A Small Place* in the language classroom. Worth mentioning is that emphasis will be deliberately put on the importance of teaching Kincaid's essay and not postcolonial literature in general. The reason behind this is that the book offers more than just knowledge on colonialism but also beneficial rhetorical strategies that could potentially lead to the development of the student's English language skills. Thereafter, I will discuss some historical perspectives on general objectives of teaching literature. I also aim to illustrate the fact that learning occurs through interesting activities and also to investigate some possible reasons to why students would be interested in reading the essay. Hopefully, this part will give an insight into possible implications in introducing the book to the students. A detailed pedagogical

approach in how to teach the essay will also be included for teachers interested in using *A Small Place* in their language classrooms.

Chapter 2: Theories

This section is dedicated to the core of this essay, which is the historical development of postcolonial literature as a genre. In addition, there will be focus on the theories that have formed and are the foundation of this sort of literature. The aim is to provide the reader with not only the main theories behind this particular literature but also some concerns that have been raised by critics of postcolonial literature. Ultimately, the goal is to problematize its historical background and thereupon illustrate and motivate the importance of introducing postcolonial literature by “*the others*” in the language classroom.

Even literature, just like former colonies, could not escape the dominance of Western countries, as will be discussed in further detail below under the section concerned with postcolonial theory, literature and criticism. European literature, the British canon in particular, has always and still acts as a touchstone of taste and value till this day. In other words, former colonizing countries still set the standards and are regarded as the universal norm and continue to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world. This is based on assumptions and “attitudes to postcolonial literatures which identify them as isolated national off-shoots of English literature, and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions” (Ashcroft, 2002:7). Accordingly, world literature, traditional values and culture in the non-Western parts of the world are constantly subjected to the Eurocentric standards of judgment, hence the marginalization of *the others* through orientalism, not only during the colonial era but till this day.

2.1 Postcolonial theory, literature and criticism

Postcolonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature from countries that are currently under colonial rule, former colonies or former colonizing countries, with emphasis on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The term postcolonial literary theory used throughout this essay is based on the definition used in *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. Ashcroft states that the background of postcolonial literary theory lies in “the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing” (Ashcroft, 2002:11).

Postcolonial criticism is concerned with theoretical and critical strategies that are used to examine culture, literature, politics and history of former colonies. Evidently, the theories and criticism behind the genre are mainly based on the radical questioning of European theories, assumptions and misrepresentation of *the other*.

It is worth mentioning that the term postcolonial literature as used in this essay refers to literature from all cultures and countries affected by the imperial process from the times of colonialization to the present day. Differences between historical backgrounds of imperialism are of less relevance; instead, emphasis lies on what the postcolonial literatures have in common, thus “that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonialization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre” (2002:2).

The development of postcolonial literature is an important and central aspect in this essay as it clearly illustrates the concerns surrounding its credibility depending on the author’s intentions and background. By this I mean that the author’s intentions and the political environment in which postcolonial literature is produced are of high relevance because they might have affected the content in the book. For instance, there are valid reasons of questioning the legitimacy of postcolonial literature produced in a colony that is under colonial rule. As illustrated in the literary analysis, some can argue that this is the case when it comes to Jamaica Kincaid’s essay, *A Small Place*, based on the idea that the essay is too tainted by the author’s own background and therefore biased. Accordingly, it is therefore fully understandable that the book can be deemed inappropriate to teach in the language classroom. My argument is that the advantages of teaching *A Small Place*, regardless of its controversial nature and writer, outweigh any eventual disadvantages with teaching it. Contrary to the sceptics, I consider the controversy surrounding the author or the book highly relevant resources in conveying the morals and ethics of the book. The combination of the content and rhetorical strategies used makes it that much more effective to teach and for students to understand the impact of colonialism on natives.

According to Ashcroft, postcolonial literature was developed through several stages. During the imperial period literature was produced by the elite and “representatives” of the imperialists. The second stage in the development of the genre was in the nineteenth century, which saw the rise of literature produced “under

imperial license” by “natives or “outcasts” (2002:5). In other words, the producers of literature at that stage were natives after being educated and assimilated by the colonializing power into its own thinking and worldview.

Ashcroft does not regard this sort of literature as *writing back*; instead, he questions its credibility due to the direct control of literary institutions by the colonizing power. Moreover, he argues that the production of literature at that stage was clearly aided and supported by the colonial government, hence the sole license to limit the discourse and decide upon the terms and conditions in the publication and distribution of literature. For this reason, it is safe to assume that this was one of the different ways in which native authors were marginalized because they did not share the same ideologies as the imperialists’. Consequently, Ashcroft concludes that “It is characteristic of these early post-colonial texts that the potential for subversion in their themes cannot be fully realized” (2002:6). This means that, even though literature at the stage still addressed the inequalities and the denigration of the natives’ culture, native authors of postcolonial literature during this era were prevented from fully exploring their anti-imperial potential.

The second stage in the development of postcolonial literature also involved the rise of authors who sympathized with the oppressors and also resulted in credibility concerns. One of the main features of imperial oppression is the control over language by the domineering culture, according to (2002:7). This aspect of oppression concerns how the imperialists imposed and established their own language as the norm, resulting in the marginalization of other dialects or other variants. Ashcroft writes that “Language becomes the medium, through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established. Such power is rejected in the emergency of an effective post-colonial voice” (Ashcroft, 2002:7). Ashcroft means that the oppressor’s dominance leads to the establishment of postcolonial literature by the colonizing power as the only appropriate and suitable in a society. Subsequently, Ashcroft questions the objectivity of the authors during this era and raises valid concerns about the possibilities that they were biased in favour of the colonizing forces. The concerns raised by Ashcroft are a reaction to misrepresentations and negative qualities *the other* (the natives) were often assigned while *the self* (the imperialists) were portrayed as more civilized and developed. For instance, exoticism, the process of “demonizing” or deliberately misrepresenting *the*

other, is a form of hegemony based on essentialism. *The other* as savages or cannibals are some of the instances whereby natives have been previously misrepresented in literature written by Western authors. As a result, Ashcroft discusses and problematizes the foundation that the post-colonial genre lies upon and suggests that the only way to reverse the imbalance was through the uprising of native authors “writing back”, thus, re-writing history from their perspective. In other words, writing back and postcolonial literature by natives is an effective rejection of the dominant postcolonial voice. One example of a native author writing back is Chinua Achebe, an African writer and postcolonial critic, who through his critically acclaimed book *Things Fall Apart* (1958) replies to the misconceptions and misrepresentation of his country Nigeria, which is a former British colony.

Ashcroft’s view on the effects of oppression on literature and authors of postcolonial literature during imperialism is shared by Kincaid in *A Small Place* and is discussed in Diane Simmons’ “Jamaica Kincaid and the Canon: In Dialogue with *Paradise Lost* and *Jane Eyre*” (1998:65-66). Kincaid also problematizes the dominance of the imperialist’s language and thus literature by Western authors via her description of her educational experiences in Antigua. Kincaid’s negative experience of the dominance of Britain both in politics and literature is obvious in her cynical description of the English language as “the language of the criminal” (1988:32). Evidently, Kincaid’s description of the English language is also based on the idea that authors that identified and sympathized with the imperialists lacked objectivity and were biased in favour of nations that colonized and continue to dominate, other nations. Kincaid implies that even their language use was adjusted to suit their intentions. Although the same could be said of Kincaid herself by those who question her credibility, the main point is that the literature is written from a native’s perspective. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, this connection between oppression and postcolonial literature is one of the reasons why *A Small Place* should be integrated in language teaching, that is, it is written from *the other’s* perspective.

2.2 The sociocultural perspective and second language development theories

In this essay I suggest a pedagogical approach to teaching literature that is the sociocultural perspective that emphasizes using a communicative approach to teaching. Accordingly, my suggestion about teaching Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small*

Place and the introduction of postcolonial literature in general (by authors from former colonies) will be based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The reason for this is that I have confidence in the benefits of communication and in learning English as a second language through interaction.

It is important to be aware of the fact that the text itself doesn't convey meaning; meaning is a result of interaction between the reader's cultural context, and the text. In other words, meaning is determined by the reader's interpretation of the text which in its turn is influenced by, for instance, the reader's background and experiences or cultural values. Consequently, this means that the reader's current opinion and perspective on the topic being read affect the interpretation of a text. This in its turn presents the teacher with a dilemma when teaching *A Small Place* or postcolonial literature in general.

Keeping in mind that students in the Western language classroom most likely do not share Kincaid's experiences, it could be problematic for them to relate to the morality of the essay. Furthermore, reading a book addressing "the sins of one's fathers" can be difficult for some who can interpret teaching the essay as an attempt to create collective guilt amongst students. It is therefore of great importance to clarify the main objectives of teaching the essay to avoid any misinterpretations. *A Small Place* is an excellent essay that requires the reader to distance themselves as well as not take the text personal. For this reason, by reading the essay, students get the opportunity to practice taking a text for what it is, thus, distancing themselves and their personal values and remaining objective during the reading process.

According to Patsy M. Lightbrown and Nina Sprada (2006), Lev Vygotsky (1978) a psychologist and influential pioneer in language development, came to a ground-breaking conclusion about second language acquisition after observing interaction between children and adults. He concluded that language develops primarily from social interaction and that language development is also a result of a supportive interactive environment (2006:20). The theory behind the importance of a supportive environment led to the coining of another one of Vygotsky's influential terms in the field of language development, "the zone of proximal development", which in this essay will be referred to as the ZPD (2006:20). With the ZPD theory, Vygotsky argued that there is a certain zone or level of knowledge in second language learners and that if combined with a supportive interaction, the result is language development. Dysthe discusses another one of Vygotsky's theory of second

language learning that is scaffolding (2003:82). Scaffolding puts emphasis on the support by those surrounding the second language learner and emphasizes the role of both the teacher and students amongst themselves. This means that both the teacher and students share the responsibility to create an environment that encourages language development through interaction.

Vygotsky's ZPD methodology and approach to language teaching are similar to those of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, according to Lightbrown and Sprada. The similarities between Vygotsky and Piaget's shared confidence in learning languages through interaction is clarified by these as they state that " Piaget saw language as a symbol system that could be used to express knowledge acquired through interaction with the physical world. For Vygotsky, thought was essentially internalized speech, and speech emerged in social interaction" (Lightbrown and Sprada 2006:20).

It seems fitting to combine the ZPD and scaffolding theories in a communicative classroom with Stephen Krashen's "input and output hypothesis", (1982) discussed by Tricia Hedge (2000:10-13). The input and output hypothesis also views language development as a shared responsibility in the language classroom yet puts more emphasis on the nature of comprehensible input and comprehensible output necessary for successful language development. Input in this theory is comprehensible knowledge expressed through language by either the teacher or fellow classmates and output (sometimes referred to as forced output) is oral production from a second language learner in an interactive environment. Comprehensible and meaningful, as opposed to simplified, input from the teacher and amongst students means that learners can learn from their teacher and each other, while they practice their language skills through "output". Knowledge can therefore be a shared experience.

While input requires meaningful input, output requires that the environment leaves room for the role of error (Hedge, 2000:15). The theory behind the role of error is a typical sociocultural approach to teaching and learning as opposed to the behavioristic approach. Though debatable, the role of error means that the teacher has a positive attitude towards errors made by students and instead of being critical, the teacher encourages error as it is considered to be part of the learning process. The role of the teacher is therefore to provide constructive feedback which learners can work on in order to develop. This attitude is shared by Olga Dysthe who also

believes in the advantages of dialogue and that the environment should encourage interaction whereby learners do not feel censored, filtered or limited (2003:34).

With this in mind, there is another aspect that needs to be considered in language teaching according to sociocultural theory. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is "a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language even when appropriate input is available" (2006:37). According to the affective filter hypothesis, regardless of how much input a learner is exposed to, it is still possible that learning still does not occur. The reason behind this is that there are certain "affects" or barriers such as feelings, motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states. Students that are for instance, bored, tense, anxious may not be open to input from their teacher.

One potential affect that is highly relevant to this essay is ethnocentricity, the belief that one's own culture is superior to others. According to Hedge, "ethnocentricity is an attitudinal variable which has been investigated, and it will not surprise experienced teachers that studies show a negative correlation with language learning" (2000:20). Hedge means that ethnocentric attitudes present various negative implications to be taken into consideration by the teacher depending on the students' relation to the English language itself or the lesson's objectives. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that *A Small Place* possibly could trigger negative ethnocentric views amongst students as the book and author address controversial ideologies and theories about colonialism. Nevertheless, the Swedish curriculum encourages teachers in Swedish schools to promote cultures and cultural diversity as the world becomes more global. In the curriculum, it is stated that "A secure identity and awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing a common cultural heritage strengthens the ability to understand and empathize with the values and conditions of others" (Skolverket, 2013:4). In my opinion, there are many effort put into strengthening students identities in the Swedish school and promoting cultural diversity. However there is still a long way to go in strengthening the students' ability to understand and empathize with other cultural values and living conditions. *A Small place* could be used as a way of giving students a glimpse to other people's conditions and values and hopefully create a sense of tolerance and better understanding of other cultures amongst students.

Chapter 3: Literary Analysis of *A Small Place*

Language and Rhetorical Strategies in the essay

One of the major rhetorical strategies used by the writer is embedded in the title itself. The title *A Small Place* can at first be interpreted as a way of minimizing the historical relevance of Antigua as a country and its history. Contrary to that, the reader soon realizes the writer's opinions on the small island's historical significance in the sense that it might be a small place but in this essay it represents all former colonies of the British Empire and the rest of Europe. The title is an understatement of what the country represents and one of the ways in which Kincaid uses understatement in an ironical way.

The general mood in the essay *A Small Place* about the Caribbean Island Antigua is cynical and full of anger and bitterness. It is impossible to separate Kincaid's writing strategies from the content in the book because the rhetoric she uses is of equal significance. In other words, the way Kincaid writes reinforces, strengthens and highlights her claims. Initially, the anger and hostility is pointed towards colonialism and its aftermath but also towards tourism and ways in which it still perpetrates the effects of colonialism. The main culprits in both issues discussed are Western countries and Westerners. Kincaid's tone when writing the essay is unique in the sense that unlike other writers she does not seem to put any effort in attracting readers to read her book. Contrary to that, she seems to be more interested in expressing her views on her own terms and conditions and less concerned with the fact that readers can be offended by her book.

In addition, Jamaica Kincaid writes in a personalised and provocative way. Her use of "you" as a rhetorical device can be interpreted as her own way of making sure that she hits right in the nerve of those who should never forget their fathers' sins and harshly reminds them of the fact that they have either benefited or continued to "reap the fruits" of colonialism.

Moreover, the writer is often repetitive when writing, giving the impression that she wants to persuade the readers to see things from her perspective and convince those in doubt that her take on colonialism is the correct version. Not only that, but it also signals her right to take an active stand and her self-entitlement to point the finger on who is to blame and how they should accept and simply take the blame without any resistance.

Kincaid also defines and generalises about the reader's identity and characteristics as illustrated in the following extract from *A Small Place*:

You are not an ugly person all the time; you are not an ugly person ordinarily; you are not an ugly person day to day. From day to day, you are a nice person. From day to day, all the people who are supposed to love you on the whole do. From day to day, as you walk down a busy street in the large and modern and prosperous city in which you work and lie, dismayed and puzzled at how alone you can feel in this crowd, how awful it is to go unnoticed, how awful it is to go unloved, even as you are surrounded by more people than you could possibly get to know in a lifetime that lasted for millennia and then out of the corner of your eye you see someone looking at you and absolute pleasure is written all over the person's face, and then you realize that you are not as revolting a presence as you think you are. (1988:15)

In the above extract, Jamaica Kincaid also touches on aspects of Western society and way of life. She stresses the contrasts between the suffering of natives in Antigua and the problems that Westerners face in their busy and materialistic societies. Kincaid portrays the tourist as someone who reflects now and again upon their own way of living and purpose in life but since no one else sees past their own needs in the western culture, the reader sees no purpose in dwelling in such issues for the simple reason that no one else seems to care. Though trivial in comparison to poverty in Antigua, Kincaid puts the spotlight on how lonely, unloved and empty Westerners' are despite being prosperous and wealthy. One interesting dilemma she raises is the lack of logic behind Westerners' needs to escape their wealthy societies and good living conditions as tourists and also their need to visit countries such as Antigua with inhabitants they would rather not be associated with. She is puzzled and writes that "but the banality of your life is very real to you; it drove you to this extreme, spending your days and nights in the company of people who despise you, people you do not like really, people you would not want to have as your actual neighbour" (Kincaid, 1988:18).

Tourism, tourists and Exploitation

The writer puts the spotlight on the tourism industry and tourists to express how native Antiguan really feel about not only tourists but also those who come from countries that took part in the exploitation of other nations' resources. The reader is given an identity as a self-entitled tourist, much like the imperialists who did not reflect on "the others'" culture and above all, only saw opportunities to exploit. She is also critical of why other people feel the need to go to other countries to satisfy their own needs, at the expense of the natives and natural owners of the country. She means that even though tourists might not be the real colonialists they carry on the tendency of taking part in the exploitation of the Antiguan's resources to their own benefit. Kincaid is trying to convey her anger towards the Westerners' continuous nonchalance and sense of entitlement even till this day, with no shame or guilt for "their" fathers' sins. Another possible reason behind her use of "you" could be aimed at the readers that are unfamiliar with the colonialism of Antigua to also personalise the text and as a result empathise with the author.

An example of Kincaid's unique and confrontational manner is in her description of the tourist as "an ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish...and it will never occur to you that the people who inhabit this place...cannot stand you [the tourist], that behind closed doors they laugh at your strangeness" (1988:17). Repeatedly, the author explains the fact that natives do not like tourists and one of these reasons is that natives in all countries dream of escaping their reality and those who are too poor to do so envy those who can and this results in resentment towards the fortunate tourists.

She continues to criticise the blind eye that tourists turn on the dark side of Antigua as long as they are pleased and catered for. For instance, the tourist rarely, reflects on the many black slaves that lost their lives in the Atlantic Ocean; all the tourist cares about is the beautiful view and water so clear they can see the white sand at the bottom. In a very ironic way, whilst she not only expresses disappointment in the tourists' exploitation of Antigua, she also acknowledges the fact that Antigua is not the perfect island everyone imagines it to be. Kincaid continues to make the connection between colonialism and the current corruption of the Antiguan government. The author questions the reader and writes:

Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts? Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you is how to corrupt our societies and how to be tyrants? You will have to accept that this is mostly your fault. (1988:34).

Another clue that could explain the native's resentments of tourists is Kincaid's reference to how tourists are treated in Antigua in comparison to the natives: "You disembark from your plane. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European-to be frank, white-and not an Antiguan black...you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched" (1988:4). It is reasonable to assume that the description of the special treatments that tourists get is symbolic and is the general treatment that Antiguan give to tourists and as a result, a treatment that even the tourist has come to expect from the natives.

Literal criticism towards Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place

As can be observed in this literary analysis of *A Small Place*, the texts stimulates many emotions and questions which could complicate the teacher's process of teaching the essay. There are many controversial questions that could be potentially raised by students or critics of postcolonial literature by *the others* with regard to the author's rhetoric and colonialism. Is Kincaid too negative and cynical? Does Antigua not gain anything from tourism? Did not Antigua gain anything positive from colonialism; if so is it fair for Jamaica Kincaid to be so critical towards Westerners and Western countries? All these questions will be addressed in the Chapter 4: Why teach *A Small Place* in the Language Classroom?

Jane King in *A Small Place Writes Back* (2002) criticizes both the content and the anger in *A Small Place* and also draws interesting conclusions from Kincaid's rhetoric in the book and her real life situation. King confesses to being biased when reading Kincaid's book because she shares a similar background with Kincaid. However, after indicating that she shares many of Kincaid's arguments, she mentions one aspect that distinguishes them, which is the fact that "we are both writers from a small place, though I in a smaller way-perhaps because I have stayed in my place, but then again, perhaps not" (King, 2002:886). King's subtle distinction of herself to

Kincaid hints at what could be interpreted as hypocrisy on Kincaid's part for criticizing the Antiguan government, tourists and the British and Americans for colonizing her country.

King goes on to discuss the fact that Kincaid herself has not only become even more fluent in what she herself calls "the language of the criminal" i.e English but also moved and currently lives in America. King's criticism of the author is understandable due to the fact that Kincaid herself is involved in what she describes as banality i.e the bizarreness of going to another country and living with people that one does not like. This is evident in the previously discussed quote where Kincaid writes that "But the banality of your life is very real to you; it drove you to this extreme, spending your days and nights in the company of people who despise, people you not like really, people who you would not like as your actual neighbour" (1988:18).

Additionally, King also goes on to sarcastically criticize Kincaid's bitter tone and generalisations about tourists as individuals that lack empathy, unpleasant, rude and oblivious of the natives' view of them. King writes a sarcastic interpretation of Kincaid's original generalisations about the tourist and states that:

Any tourist who comes to Antigua will apparently become an unpleasant creature who will decide that the ancestors of the natives of Antigua could not have been as clever as the ancestors of that tourist. The tourist will be oblivious to the fact that the Antiguan will hate him, will think his manners bad, his way of eating ugly, his accent unpleasant and his relationship with his body ungainly (17). Kincaid wants the tourist to know that the natives will hate him enough to put ground glass in his food, and that this is not surprising since every tourist is a native of somewhere... (King, 2002:894)

Clearly, it is possible that Jamaica Kincaid's rhetorical way of writing *A Small Place* could potentially alienate or antagonise some of her readers as they may feel vulnerable and confronted. Nevertheless, I don't think the writer's rhetorical writing's primary purpose is to promote emotions of collective guilt amongst her readers but mostly to raise awareness and remind people of the aftermath of colonialism. Her intentions are to stop another form of colonialism in the tourism industry and encourage people to take action. To challenge tourists to think twice

when vacationing in places like Antigua, whereby natives have been exploited more than enough. At the same time, since she is writing back to the Empire and considering Antigua's history, Jamaica Kincaid probably feels entitled to express her anger in any way she deems appropriate. She doesn't feel the need to suppress her raw opinions and frustration because of the suffering colonisation has brought to her people. The rhetoric of "writing back" is only a tool of effectively criticizing former colonizers and telling the story from a native's perspective, a version that is rarely told.

Chapter 4: Working with A Small Place in the ESL Classroom

Colie and Slater (2009) write about teachers' ambivalent attitudes towards teaching literature in the English Foreign Language classroom which was a subject of debate a few years ago. During that period, teachers questioned whether teaching literature in the EFL classroom at pre-university level was appropriate or not. The authors also maintain that the ambivalent attitude towards teaching literature amongst teachers was caused by the primary emphasis on oral production. Consequently, teachers have been skeptical towards literature because "literature was thought of as embodying a static, convoluted kind of language, far removed from the utterances of daily communication" (1987:2). Since teachers considered oral production and functional language to be the main objectives in teaching in EFL classroom, they therefore began to question whether literature was suitable for English language learners.

In *Teaching Literature* Elaine Showalter claims that "in the past, most educators agreed that teaching literature was a way of making people better human beings and better citizens" (Showalter, 2003:22). She also maintains that when English literature was firstly introduced as a course of study in England in the 1820s, its purpose was to moralize, civilize, and humanize (2003: 22).

Showalter also writes about previous efforts by minority groups in American universities to challenge and question the canon. Likewise, Showalter discusses how teaching literature can and has been used as a platform to challenge the canon in America by minority groups such as feminists and African-American critics who were interested in how minorities were portrayed in books by questioning if the book is telling the truth about them and what it says about "us" and "them". Women and feminists also turned to literature courses for enlightenment and consciousness-raising about their political struggles (Showalter, 2003:23).

4.1 Why is it important to teach "A Small Place" in ESL and language classroom?

This part of the essay will answer the question why teachers should teach Jamaica Kincaid's essay, *A Small Place*. In this chapter, the main aim is to demonstrate the importance and advantages of exposing students to literature from other cultures than

their own. Moreover, I intend to show the importance of using literature whereby authors from former colonies “write back”, in order to familiarize students with historical events from a different perspective to that of the West. Besides discussing the advantages of the ethics in the essay, focus will also be on the language development benefits of exposing students to the stylistic strategies in the form of the rhetorical writing in the essay.

I have chosen some of the main points to explain why teaching *A Small Place* is crucial and important in relation to the aims enlisted in the Swedish syllabus. According to the Swedish syllabus (2011, 2), teaching in the subject of English should give students the opportunities to develop the following:

- ❖ Understanding of spoken and written English, and also the ability to interpret content.
- ❖ The ability to express oneself and communicate in English in speech and writing.
- ❖ The ability to use different language strategies in different contexts.
- ❖ The ability to adapt language to different purposes, recipients and situations.

Language benefits of reading the essay in relation to the syllabus

From a linguistic perspective, the essay is suitable and fulfills the above goals of the syllabus in teaching students strategies of reading, interpreting and remaining objective while reading. Collie and Slater consider literature to be a valuable resource for language development and write that “in reading literary texts, students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers and thus they gain additional familiarity with many linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode” (1987:4). In accordance with Collie and Slater’s view on linguistic forms and conventions, it is clear that Kincaid’s unconventional rhetorical style and writing skills are valuable because they challenge the learner to read between the lines in order to understand the text.

From both social and linguistic standpoint, it is vital for students to be challenged with other ideas that they “do not already have the words to express” (Frederick, 2003:3). This means that by teaching unfamiliar ideas, students are exposed to a different and functional sort of literacy that they can continue to use independently. Teaching literature by “*the others*” is therefore an excellent way for

students to gain a different sort of language, literacy and knowledge that they would otherwise go amiss.

The ability to interpret content

Reading and the struggle to make sense of a text fosters language development according to Hedge (2000:188). Hedge means that the dynamic relationship between a reader and text is a necessary "struggle" for language learners because by managing to create meaning from a text, is a milestone in a language learners quest in developing their language skills. Kincaid's essay can also be used as way of illustrating how the author's background and perspective can lead the reader into empathizing or despising certain characters in a book as it demands a certain level of ability in reading between the lines.

The previously discussed close link on the purposes and effects of the rhetorical strategies to the content in the essay is an excellent way to show students' the importance of distant reading and thereafter, being able to distance one's own personal thoughts and values as a reader so as to understand the author's objectives in the essay.

Vocabulary expansion

In my view, literature is a timeless source of knowledge and vocabulary expansion. Introducing the novel will not only expose students to new and unfamiliar knowledge but new vocabulary that in its turn will contribute to learners' ability to decode meaning of the next text they might be challenged with. Reading is therefore seen as a process which means that new learnt vocabulary makes it easier for a learner to understand the next that they are presented with. In other words reading *A Small Place* could prove beneficial for the learner's comprehension of the next book. The vocabulary expansion will in its turn benefit other language skills such as speaking, listening and even the ability to adapt language strategies to proper recipients and situations.

However, it is important to recognize that the book might be difficult for some students because it demands the ability to read between the lines and some historical knowledge in colonialism is needed. For this reason it is important to work according to the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which is Vygotsky's previously mentioned second language development theory. The goal is to present a book that is

not too difficult, yet slightly above their cognitive abilities. The effect of working according to the ZPD is that it promotes learner autonomy in the sense that challenging students in combination with a supportive interactive environment, results in students' ability to attain more than they otherwise would do independently.

*Ethical implications of teaching *A Small Place* in relation to the syllabus*

First and foremost, introducing *A Small Place* signals an attempt to convey attitudes and values of tolerance and empathy that are stated in the curriculum for upper secondary school. According to the English upper secondary curriculum, "the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people are the values that the education should represent and impart"(Skolverket, 2013:4). In my view, my choice of text will help achieve the curriculum's vision because the essay deals with people's struggle of freedom and the empowerment of those who live under the shadows of inequalities.

Cultural Enrichment: Their history is Our history

In my opinion, one important aspect as to why it is essential to teach *A Small Place* is to raise students' awareness of their own cultural context, society and country's historical background as well as other countries'. In this case the goal is to raise awareness about Western countries' imperialism and dominance of third-world countries and the consequences of this.

Not only is the goal to stimulate discussion and reflection amongst students and on the extent to which countries' historical backgrounds are intertwined. Reflection on how their society's riches and comfort was initially facilitated by raw materials exploitation from other countries, which in its turn resulted in poverty and suffering for those countries. The essay sheds light on the role that the students' own country has played and the effects they have had on others. Jamaica Kincaid expresses the negative effects and impact of colonialism in the following heart wrenching quote emphasizing that "even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you" (1988:37). As hinted in the subtitle to this section "Their history is Our history", I want to emphasize that the aim is not to create a sense of collective guilt amongst student or victimize anyone but to recognize that countries' history

backgrounds are often intertwined. I therefore aim to discourage the “them and us” mentality and encourage empathy and understanding of others.

As illustrated in the essay, the aftermath of imperialism and colonization is still ongoing and is kept alive by the tourism industry in which some people in Western countries actively participate. While on holidays, it is vital to be aware of the possibility that the author’s claims about the native’s view on the tourists might be true. Jamaica Kincaid criticizes Westerners for their lack of sympathy and reflection over the natives’ unfortunate living conditions. Interestingly, Justin D. Edwards concludes that colonialism affects both the wealthy and the impoverished. Similarly to Kincaid, he maintains that due to these inequities “the poor nation suffers from exploitation, poverty and marginalization while the powerful country is caught up in perpetuating a vicious cycle of greed and consumption that causes a profound disconnect in their lives, displacing those at the center of power from ethics, morality and humanity” (Edwards, 2008:163).

Authentic material to teach: Tourism, Consumption and Globalization

Collie and Slater consider literature to be an authentic source of information: “reading the literature of a historical period is, after all, one of the ways we have to help us imagine what life was like in that other foreign territory...” (1987:4). Integrating *A Small Place* in the language classroom will be an excellent opportunity for students to reflect on their own society in comparison to “the others”, in other words, that the students are given the opportunity to step into a different role to understand current inequalities caused by historical events.

The Swedish school curriculum states that “an international perspective is important to be able to understand one’s own reality in a global context and in order to create international solidarity” (Skolverket: 2013:6). As a result, the international perspective will help bridge the gap between the students’ own experiences and the importance of being empathetic to the less fortunate because evidently, had it not been for the Western countries exploitation of other countries, third world countries could have easily been the developed countries. In other words, had the West not benefited from exploiting raw materials from former colonies, tables could have easily been turned to the West’s disadvantage.

This is supported in *A Small Place* whereby Kincaid clarifies the Western tourists’ attitude and thoughts towards the natives and what the tourists consider to

be a primitive lifestyle. She writes that "... this ugly but joyful thought will swell inside you: their ancestors were not clever in the ways yours were, for then would it not be you who would be in harmony with nature and backwards" (Kincaid, 1989: 17).

4.2 Why would students be interested in reading *A Small Place*?

In this part of the essay, focus will be put on the possible reasons why students might be interested in reading Jamaica Kincaid's essay. Furthermore, since the essay can be perceived in different ways depending on the reader's history, I will be exploring different ways that students might interpret the book and the implications of teaching it as a result.

The debate about the relevance of postcolonial literature

In *A Small Place*, the author asks the reader a very relevant question, "Do you ever try to understand why people like me cannot get over the past, cannot forgive and forget?" (1988:26). Her explanation is that, though the people who actually did the wrongdoings are long gone, it is important to understand that Westerners have benefited from her people's exploitation. This is her clarification to the fact that historical acts of exploitation are never really over no matter how much people try to turn a blind eye to them. Kincaid gives a vivid account of this by mentioning Western countries and companies that directly or indirectly were and are still benefiting by robbing Antiguans of their resources. She writes that "the Barclay brothers, who started Barclays bank, were slave traders. That is how they made their money. When the English outlawed the slave trade, the Barclay brothers went into banking. It made them even richer" (1988:26). In other words, the author means that, even though slave trade and colonialism happened long ago, there is no denying that Westerners have and are still benefiting from slave trade.

In my view, young people nowadays are more connected to other parts of the world through modern technology in the form of social media. Unfortunately, some of the information that is readily available to students can sometimes be misleading, incorrect or biased to the former colonies' disadvantage. Consequently, the school and teachers should play an important role in making sure that students are familiarized with factual and scientifically based knowledge of social issues as opposed to

reading about them in social media. It is therefore safe to assume that students who are critical towards postcolonial literature might have asked themselves why postcolonialism and postcolonial literature are still relevant until this day considering that most of the former colonies have gained independence. Why is it still a sensitive subject? Should Jamaica Kincaid let things go? Jamaica Kincaid provides an answer to these important questions and writes that

“I am filled with rage” but the criminal says “But why?”. And when I blow things up and make life generally unlivable for the criminal... the criminal is shocked, surprised. But nothing can erase my rage-not an apology, not a large sum of money, not the death of the criminal-for this wrong can never be made right. (1988:32).

Even though it is important to encourage students to think critically about information they are exposed to, it is evident, in the above quote by Kincaid, that trivializing or questioning the effects of colonialism has had on former colonies is not the way forward. Instead, it is vital for students to have an understanding of what it really means to come from a former colony. I would like to think that students are more interested in a different version of historical events about the other’s loss of identity, language or celebrating the colonizer’s traditions but your own and even celebrating people who belong to countries that were involved in the colonialization of one’s own country. Thereafter, the students can decide where they stand on the subject of colonialism.

4.3 How to teach *A Small Place* in the language classroom as theme work

In this chapter, the goal is to provide a detailed outline of how the essay can be taught as a theme over a certain period of time. As previously mentioned, the teaching of the essay will be based on the sociocultural theory and perspective; this will be evident due to the emphasis that will be made on interaction between students throughout the outline. It is important to understand that all the steps in the outline are equally important for better chances of succeeding teaching the essay because they take into consideration the controversial nature of both the author and the issues in the book. The outline is therefore a combined attempt at making sure that any possible negative implications while teaching the book are minimized.

Worth mentioning is that not only is the approach of the theme influenced by sociocultural theory, it is also inspired by the process approach as opposed to the product approach, hence the choice of setting aside and dedicating a period of time to teaching the essay (Hedge 2000:308). Initially, the goal is to have a month-long theme dedicated to working with *A Small place* whereby students work with the essay as well as the author. I also acknowledge the fact that lessons do not always fold out as planned, especially dealing with an essay that is so much open to controversy such as *A Small Place*. Consequently, setting a time limit on the theme work is not of much relevance, rather making sure that all steps are followed and carried out effectively. The theme will be divided into different sessions of pre-reading, while and post reading exercises as recommended by Hedge (2000:209-211).

Pre reading exercises

Pre-reading exercises are crucial in the introduction of the theme as it can have a major impact on how open and receptive students will be throughout the process. A possible starting point in introducing the essay is dividing students into groups that they will be working in during the entire week. Subsequently, students can begin to do some research on the author, Jamaica Kincaid and the essay by, for example, watching interviews with the author. Afterwards, students can be given a brief introduction to the author's rhetorical strategies. With this brief knowledge, the goal at this stage is to challenge the students to find clues that possibly could explain purposes in why the author wrote the book. Secondly, students are presented with a challenge to speculate on reasons behind the author's rhetorical strategies as well as where she gets her inspiration and how all this could possibly have come to influence her writing. This is an attempt to show students at an early stage that the choice of rhetoric seems to be conscious and serves an important purpose highlighting inequalities. Hopefully, this will help students to understand what lies behind the way the author writes and her commitment to raising awareness of the world's inequalities caused by colonialism. I believe that this will not only create a sense of understanding for the writer's rhetoric, but it will also help students to distance themselves from the text while reading and not lose the ability to be critical towards the writer.

After researching the background of the author, the students could be challenged to speculate on why they are being taught this particular book. During this discussion, they can also be advised to express an attitude, their thoughts and expectations about the essay and author. In my opinion, students themselves and their previous knowledge are a resource that should be welcomed in the language classroom. The curriculum emphasises that “students should get the opportunity to reflect over their experiences and apply their knowledge” (Skolverket, 2013:8). Accordingly, it is essential and empowering to students when they notice that their teacher explores and values their previous knowledge. In this case, students who have previous knowledge of colonialism can be encouraged to share their knowledge or any experiences in relation to the “the other” or “the self”. I am fully aware of the fact that this could be problematic but this exercise does not aim to categorise students but to encourage students to actively interact and express their emotions on this subject matter in relation to their experiences. Another pre-reading exercise could be a discussion amongst students on the intriguing title *A Small Place* and the interesting alias of the author as Jamaica Kincaid.

Another approach to introducing the theme is to focus on the general topics that are addressed in the book. The ideal pre-reading exercises in this case would be group discussions on topics such as racism, tourism, colonialism and oppression.

These strategies are not only an attempt at creating interest and curiosity about what the book has in store for them but also to give the teacher an idea about how receptive students are to postcolonial literature. As a result, the teacher has the opportunity to trace any negative reactions, like those experienced by Frederick & Lindsay (See Chapter 1) and clarify that the objectives of reading the book are not to impose certain values but to read a book written from a different perspective than they are used to and also having an open discussion on postcolonial literature. Objectivity and freedom of speech are encouraged by the Swedish curriculum as it requires that “the school should be open to different ideas and encourage their expression” (Skolverket, 2013:4). Furthermore, teachers are expected to “openly discuss and together with the students analyse different values, views and problems, and the consequences of these” (Skolverket 2013:11).

While reading exercises

When students begin reading the essay, it is important for them to deal with and document their emotions whether in connection to the book or previous experiences with issues such as discrimination or racism or situations whereby they have been the victims of inequalities due to their background. Students should be encouraged to be active readers and keep a journal of their thoughts and reflections while reading. This can be achieved by giving students an activity that requires them to revisit their notes from the introduction session to make comparisons with their current thoughts and the expectations they had about the book.

Furthermore, students can be assigned as homework to document their reactions and different ways that they can relate or not relate to Jamaica Kincaid's own experiences and thoughts in the essay. It is recommended that this exercise be an individual task so that students don't impose their own values on each other. The individual exercise can be followed up with a group or class discussion. Collie and Slater support the idea of group work and stress that "although it may seem paradoxical we have found that shared activity can be especially fruitful in helping the learner find a way into what is usually an intensely personal and private experience..." (2009:9).

One tried and tested exercise that students appreciate when dealing with social studies is debating. As previously mentioned, raising awareness of the relationship between "the other" and "the self" is crucial in order to understand the aftermath of colonialism. During the debate, students could get the opportunity to represent either a former colony (e.g Antigua) or a former imperialist government (e.g Britain) and motivate the role that their countries played during colonialism and find suggestions in possible solutions to the aftermath of colonialism. The aim is to give students the opportunity to have a better understanding of the actions of the countries that they represent and their consequences on the countries' inhabitants. Though there are many advantages with debates and discussion, this activity risks going overboard and could lead to a negative atmosphere in the classroom if not supervised. For this reason, under thorough supervision, students can be given the opportunity to represent and support their views as "the other" or "the self" in a debate. The goal with this activity is to get both perspectives on colonialism from the students. Since *A Small Place* is mostly written from "the other's" perspective, there is a risk that

students become defensive and interpret the objectives of the lesson as lacking in objectivity.

After students have read the book, the teacher can suggest collaborating with another teacher during the last sessions in the theme work. Ideally, the teacher could collaborate with teachers that are most likely to have valuable knowledge in postcolonial literature, criticism and the historical background of colonialism as context of *A Small Place*. Such teachers could be history or social studies teachers. The goal behind collaboration is the fact that colonialism is a controversial subject and the more expertise available to the students during post reading exercises the better. Finally, students can revisit their notes from the introduction session to make comparisons between their current thoughts and expectations they had on the book.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *A Small Place* is an excellent essay to teach because it enables the teacher to teach values, ethics and morals that are the foundation of Swedish schools. Moreover, the essay makes it possible to have open discussions about important and controversial subjects that might otherwise be daunting to work with for both the teacher and the students. In addition, while working with the essay, students will get the opportunity to deal with and express their emotions and reactions towards current issues and affairs that are similar to those discussed by Kincaid. Such current issues could be the latest invasion of, for instance, middle-eastern countries by superpowers.

As illustrated in the language development theory section, the language used in the book presents an opportunity of dealing with different forms of writing. The author's unconventional ways of writing is a subject matter worth dwelling on and familiarizing students with. It is the ideal book because teachers can teach both social studies and language development using the book.

The essay also supports teachers in their quest to revise the canon and reflect on how problematic it is to continue teaching books written from "our" own perspective and ignoring the others'. Jamaica Kincaid's book is also an excellent essay that is worth introducing, seeing as students might not be familiar with literature from other parts of the world and cultures other than Western countries. The integration of the book itself into the often Eurocentric language classroom is important and symbolic. It is important in a sense that it is a way for teachers to challenge and question the canon, because who is to say that certain literature contains the ultimate truth and therefore should be preferred over the other? Is there a chance that these canonical books are one-sided and biased? It is important to recognize the role Western countries and literature have in affecting the existence of "the other" from exploiting resources to misrepresentations in the canon. As a result, the conclusion is that variation should be ideal and literature by both Western writers and writers from former colonies can complement each other, seeing as historical events affect people differently depending on if one is considered to be *the self* or *the other*.

It would have been ideal for this project to carry out a qualitative analysis with informants to found out not only how much postcolonial literature they are or have

been exposed to during their school years in the Swedish school and also how often or how many books by authors from former colonies they have or had the opportunity to read in the English language classroom. Another qualitative analysis that would have added more to this project would have been interviewing Upper secondary school teachers in order to investigate how much they integrate postcolonial literature and if they have experiences in teaching it. In that way, this would have added more to the essay as it would have given an indication of and insight into the attitudes towards integrating postcolonial literature. For future references, it would be interesting to perform this type of qualitative analysis or experiments by introducing the recommended literature, not only to observe students' attitudes towards literature from former colonies but also to make sure that the Swedish language classroom is open and not heavily influenced only by Western canon.

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