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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

HOW AND WHY JAMAICA KINCAID'S *A SMALL PLACE* CAN BE
USED IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM IN SWEDEN

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Abstract: This essay deals with why and how postcolonial literature, such as Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, could be incorporated in English Language Teaching at the upper secondary level in Sweden. The curriculum and syllabus for English are used to support the argument that postcolonial literature is a valuable and necessary part of the language classroom because it provides a perspective that is seldom represented in the Western Canon. With the aid of postcolonial theory and sociocultural theory, I argue that both teachers and students need to be critical of how the construction of knowledge is produced and be aware of Eurocentric tendencies and that students will be able to better comprehend the content of *A Small Place* through collaborative learning. In conclusion, postcolonial literature such as *A Small Place* provides an opportunity to look at issues such as colonization, globalization and the tourist industry from a non-Western perspective and help broaden the students' horizons regarding such issues.

Keywords: Postcolonial literature, Postcolonial theory, Language teaching, Cultural awareness, Eurocentric, Critical pedagogy, Sociocultural theory

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The aim of this essay is to prove the value of reading *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid in the English language classroom. To achieve the aim, a postcolonial literary analysis of the novel will be conducted. However, it is also important to argue why students should read literature in the language classroom. As Tricia Hedge argues, there are several reasons for why we should read literature: one of the reasons is that the act of reading can be a great tool for developing basic language skills such as increasing vocabulary and the understanding of the structuring of written media, which leads to better writing and reading skills. A second reason is that through analysing works of literature the reader is challenged to and gains the ability to draw connections, evaluate evidence, question facts and note the specifics by combining the points to gain a rich experience. These are all analytical skills that are fundamental in life. Works of literature sometimes challenge a reader to hold opposing concepts in their mind. This kind of processing can help a reader to be open to new ideas, allowing critical thinking and independence. An additional reason for why reading literature is valuable is that it allows the reader see the world from different perspectives, dwelling artificially in various times and places so that they learn how other people view the world (Hedge, 2000). By broadening their horizons readers are better equipped to think about actions and consequences and they are given the tools to become engaged, knowledgeable citizens of the world.

The Swedish curriculum for English at upper secondary school states that learners should be given the opportunity to gain knowledge regarding living situations, social matters and cultural structures in different settings and parts of the world where English is used (Skolverket, 2011). Yet when it concerns the literature used in practice, it is limited to the Western Canon, which is severely lacking in diversity. Thus, I would argue that as teachers in a multicultural society must not to neglect literature from different parts of the world. Knowledge is a social construct that is heavily reliant on culture, custom, environment and historical specificity. Because the knowledge we gain in school is often socially and historically rooted and bound by interest, teachers should be more critical of how and why the construction of knowledge is done. They ought to question why the dominant culture celebrates and legitimizes some constructions of reality while other constructions are not considered as relevant (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009). An example of when the dominant culture is being celebrated is the curriculum for the upper secondary school in

Sweden where the Eurocentric perspective is evident in the fundamental values which state that *Western* humanism is optimal when wanting to encourage “a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility” in the individual, as if it is superior to any other humanism. However, the curriculum goes on to say that teaching should “not emphasise one aspect of knowledge at the cost of another” (Skolverket, 2011). By reading literature presenting a different perspective compared to the Western Canon, such as postcolonial literature, learners can be challenged into reflecting over their place in the world, allowing them to encounter cultures, places and times that they otherwise would not have experienced.

The lack of postcolonial literature I have noticed during my language studies in upper secondary school, and even at university level, has inspired me to reflect upon the potentials of using postcolonial literature, such as *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid, in the English language classroom at the upper secondary level in Sweden. “The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there.” (Skolverket, 2011:4). If the curriculum claims that we live in a multicultural society then this should be reflected in our education and the literature we use in practice. Language teachers use culture in language but not language as culture. By this I mean that language teachers include culture, but do not put into question traditional boundaries such as “self” and “the Other”.

This essay aspires to study how and why postcolonial literature should be used in English language teaching (ELT) here in Sweden. This will be done by taking into consideration what role teachers could play in including postcolonial literature in ELT at the upper secondary school in Sweden and why learners should become acquainted with postcolonial literature as a way to broaden their perspectives in a world that is increasingly globalized. Postcolonial literature is created by people from former colonies who are responding to the acts of the colonizers. It puts into question how colonized people are depicted in works of literature and how it is used to justify racialism and colonialism (Hart & Goldie, 1993).

As previously cited, the Swedish curriculum for English seeks to enlighten learners concerning cultures, social settings and living conditions in places where English is used. This can, according to Michael Byram (2001), be equivalent to intercultural competence, which deals with an individual’s capability to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world. Furthermore, Byram sees the classroom as one of three mediums in which intercultural

competence can be attained (1997:65). This is why ELT serves as a good medium to teach cultural awareness as well as linguistic awareness since English is a global language that enables non-native speakers to overcome hurdles of culture and languages and acquire access to a globalised world of communication. By using postcolonial literature in ELT, authors from previous colonies get the chance to give a voice to their version of “the Other” instead of being portrayed by authors from the West and it becomes possible to take a stand against Orientalism, where the denigrating depictions of Eastern cultures are commonly made by writers from the West (Said, 1978).

According to the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school, “a historical perspective in teaching enables students to develop an understanding of the present, and a preparedness for the future” (Skolverket 2011:6). Following the previous statement, the reasons for including *A Small Place* in ELT are that it is a novel that will help illuminate the impact of the British colonization and the English language on former colonies, such as Antigua. In addition, it gives an opportunity to compare how colonial Antigua and modern Antigua are depicted in the novel. Furthermore, the influence of globalization is very much evident in *A Small Place*, which is another reason for including it in ELT in Sweden, based on the social development of recent years. “Changes in working life, new technologies, internationalisation and the complexities of environmental issues impose new demands on people’s knowledge and ways of working.” (Skolverket 2011:5). The advancements made in technology have had their particular role in the social direction of the world, be it through social media or getting news updates at the exact moment of an event. Therefore students should have the tools to properly cope with the huge influx of information. Additionally since both students and teachers in Sweden have on one or more occasions been tourists, the novel is ideal for illustrating the other side of spectrum, which is the perspective of the native of the country that you are visiting. Finally, it gives a voice to “the Other” in a manner that is lacking in novels that are part of the Western Canon and this makes it even more relevant to include in a multicultural language classroom.

1.2 Method and Material

This essay is based on a literary analysis with the motivation of using it for future pedagogical purposes. The ethical implications were taken into consideration early on in the process because the choice of *A Small Place* was personal one. I first came across the term postcolonial literature at university level and this novel was used as an example. In the discussions about the curriculum and syllabus that followed amongst my peers it became clear

to us that this was an aspect of English Language Teaching that was lacking in Swedish ELT. Making it my ambition to write an essay based on the claim that postcolonial literature is neglected yet valuable addition to ELT in Sweden.

Based on the sweeping statements made by the author towards the Western (white) tourist, the students, depending on their origin, could in fact oppose the novel because they would feel under attack and therefore be reluctant to read it. As previously stated, the curriculum for the Swedish upper secondary school makes it clear that students should be given the opportunity to further their knowledge about cultural and living conditions in places where English is used. This gives the motivation for the reasons to use this particular text in language teaching.

The theoretical framework is based on postcolonial theory and sociocultural theory. The first of these criticises of how the Western Canon is perceived as the norm when teaching about literature with little or no regard to how the depictions of other cultures are represented in the typical novels. Sociocultural theory is used to highlight the connection between language development and social interaction.

Furthermore, the pedagogical and didactic aspects of teaching *A Small Place* were mainly developed with the aid of the arguments derived from Collie & Slater in *Literature in the Language Classroom and Teaching* (1987) and *Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (2002).

1.3 Previous Research

The purpose of this section is to take into consideration what previous scholars have discovered while examining *A Small Place*, and by doing so, gain a better understanding of the novel. This is followed by how previous scholars have attempted to integrate *A Small Place* in literature and language teaching, in addition to the use of postcolonial literature in ELT in general.

A Small Place was written in 1988 by Jamaica Kincaid, who was born Elaine Potter Richardson. The name change came about in 1973 and was according to Kincaid “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). The name change could also have been an effort to stay connected to her Caribbean origin. According to Edwards this a strategy used by “the Other” to do exactly that, but he refers to it as “remaining” (2007:2).

In *Constructing a Nation: Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place* by Corinna McLeod (2008:77) the question of how to categorize *A Small Place* arises; some have branded it as biography or autobiography, while others have categorized it as a work of fiction. McLeod goes on to conclude that it is all of the above, based on the attempts made in it to define a postcolonial nation. But in this essay it will be referred to as a novel for the sake of simplicity. Aside from that the novel is difficult to categorize, McLeod (2008:78) raises the issue that it also is problematic to decide in what manner *A Small Place* should be discussed. According to McLeod, the reader can very well be overwhelmed, both by the manner of Kincaid's direct approach in her writing and because of the many issues, such as "nation formation, national identity, neo-colonialism and economic underdevelopment" that are at stake. This is also mentioned by Justin D. Edwards in *Understanding Jamaica Kincaid* (2009), where he writes about how reviewers and even an editor of the *New York Times* were critical of Kincaid's writing style. Edwards states that one reviewer claimed that Kincaid immersed "into a snivelling attack on the sins of the nasty and long departed colonial power", while another argued that the novel was "distorted by anger" (2007:8). But not everyone voiced a dismay with *A Small Place*. Some like Diane Simmons argued that because of "the work's emotional and political complexities" critics tended to misunderstand Kincaid's portrayal of postcolonial Antigua (2007:78). According to McLeod, Salman Rushdie was another author who praised Kincaid by calling the novel "a jeremiad of great clarity and force that one might have called torrential were the language not so finely controlled" (2008:78).

With regards to *A Small Place* and its use for pedagogical purposes Rhonda D. Frederick, a professor in Caribbean and African-American studies, has shared her experiences with incorporating the novel in a literature course about the Caribbean. Her intentions for incorporating *A Small Place* are illustrated in *What if you're an Incredibly Unattractive, Fat, Pastrylike-fleshed Man?* (2003), where she states that she wanted to illustrate that there is more to the Caribbean than just tourism and also to expand the knowledge of the students concerning the Caribbean. Additionally, Frederick hoped that by bringing in a different perspective of the Caribbean students would be able to "interrogate their own Western worldviews, and to foster a recognition of the workings of oppression" (ibid). Frederick also argues that "postcolonial and multicultural writers often write out their differences from dominant culture; they also articulate the various ways they have been made marginal to that culture" (2002:3). She expresses a concern that students who would read *A Small Place* on their own would miss what Kincaid is trying to convey in her novel. As a consequence, Frederick suggests approaching *A Small Place* with a different reading strategy, one that

includes pre-reading exercises, since her students were “angry, defensive, or otherwise closed to Kincaid’s text” (2003:2). Another language teacher, Lindsay Aergeter, also attempted to incorporate the novel and shared Frederick’s experience that the students had “less-than-positive responses to *A Small Place* and similar texts” (2003:2). In order to prepare the students for the issues that are raised in *A Small Place* and also the writer’s manner of writing style Aergeter suggests an integration of reading tasks that target towards racism, exploitation and colonialism.

Kanishka Chowdhury (1992) shares in her paper *Teaching the postcolonial text: Strategies and Interventions* the strategies she utilized while teaching postcolonial literature at a state university in the United States. Chowdhury argues that it is not enough “to acknowledge “other” texts; as educators we have to examine the ways we read these texts” and that we instead have to question why the canon does not include postcolonial literature (1992:191). Chowdhury applied two strategies when teaching the postcolonial texts of her choosing. At first the students were familiarized with the specific region mentioned in the novel, its cultural and social history in addition to being handed one description of the nation’s colonial past and its postcolonial present. They were also given a second hand-out with general information about the population and a map of the nation. This was done because of the lack of knowledge the students had about non-Western nations. Chowdhury’s second method involved raising crucial questions about what reading strategies the students should employ while reading a postcolonial text and if it was necessary to read such a text in a different manner than texts included in the Western canon. Other questions that were cultivated include:

How do we as “outside” readers comment on the cultural and social practices of others? How do the cultural experiences of other people compare with similar or dissimilar practices in the United States? How does one measure the literary “value” of postcolonial texts outside the Proust or Tolstoy mode of comparison? Should we even apply the value systems of the high European bourgeoisie and its American sympathizers to any text? (Chowdhury, 1992)

The above questions were met by silence from the students and according to Chowdhury this was an implication of both the contradictory nature of the questions and the students discomfort at such questions. According to Chowdhury, teaching postcolonial texts can at times turn into lectures about presenting information because of the students lack the necessary background knowledge needed to grasp the presented content of the postcolonial

text. This makes it even more important that teachers do not become plain providers of information, but that they strive for an inclusive classroom that aims towards higher student participation. In conclusion, Chowdhury argues that the discussions about postcolonial texts need to be “within a larger critique of the ideology of knowledge production and canon formation” (1992:194).

1.4 Essay structure

The first segment of this essay deals with literary and pedagogical theories and why *A Small Place* can be used in English language teaching at upper secondary school in Sweden. The following segment includes a pedagogical outline on how the novel can be taught in the language classroom. In the final segment, there is a discussion of the reasons behind why and how *A Small Place* is a novel of great importance for English language teaching and why teachers should use it in their classrooms, in addition to how it can be taught.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Postcolonial theory

A chief function of postcolonial theory is to question and reinvent the ways of cultural awareness, or, to be more precise, the manners of seeing and of being seen. Since the theory has an emphasis on the connection between the colonialist and the colonized it will aid me in examining the culture, literature, politics and history in previous colonies and how and why this can be used in ELT. There are postcolonial critics, such as Edward Said, who argue that knowledge and representations are tools the West uses for dominating those not belonging to it. They look at how literature depicts “the Other” (the colonized), how they are treated or undermined by the colonizers (Said, 1978).

The power of the written word is so significant that it changes and shapes our view of the world. Part of the dominant culture’s power lies in their ability to use the written word to solidify their depictions of events and humans as the norm. The colonized have less access to all the things that grant the colonialists power. This is also mentioned by Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, where he writes that there is a certain attitude towards novels written by Europeans with “the assumption that this way of writing and representing reality is the unquestionable norm, so that the situations depicted can stand for all possible forms of human interaction” and because of this all other norms are demoted to subordinate roles while “white, Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted by a sleight of hand to this elevated status...”. Barry goes on to remark on how Franz Fanon, one of the forerunners of postcolonial criticism, argued that in order to gain political agency in the face of oppression, colonized people need to “reclaim their own past” and move towards disintegrating the colonizers dominance over the past (2009:186).

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in one of the foundational texts of postcolonial theory, *The Empire Writes Back*, previous colonizers maintain their power since they are the ones setting the norm by their “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” (2002:7). Furthermore, Ashcroft states that postcolonial theory developed because of “the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing” (2002:11). This is also evident in *Incorporating multicultural literature in English language teaching curriculum*

(2009), in which Behbood Mohammadzadeh states that teachers tend to use traditional reading strategies and are because of this not conscious of Eurocentric tendencies, which can only be scrutinized by use of postcolonial literary criticism. Hence, teachers are not capable of providing the necessary tools required for the students to critically challenge depictions of various cultural groups they come across in literature. By using postcolonial theory, teachers will be capable of guiding their students towards a better understanding of how dominant and subordinate cultures are represented and depicted both in Eurocentric and postcolonial literature. Furthermore, Mohammadzadeh argues that incorporation of multicultural literature should go beyond informing students of the previously mentioned issues and move towards empowering the students because to “empower students is to help them develop the ability to identify, critically analyse, and even take action to solve problems related to cultural differences” (2009:24).

The emergence of postcolonial literature written by the colonized first occurred when the colonizers educated the colonized and conformed them into their manner of thinking and perceiving the world. Ashcroft argues that postcolonial writers “emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization 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). Since the literature materialized during a period when the colonizers were still in power and able to control what was being published it is not viewed as giving a voice to the colonized. Hence the colonized writers were, according to Ashcroft, limited in addressing the oppression of the colonizers. Ashcroft argues that when the colonizers set their own language as the norm it results in the diminishing of the colonized own language and the growth of the colonizers’ language. This leads to that the notions of order, truth and reality are interpreted through the colonizers’ language, resulting in an increase of the colonizer’s power over the colonized. With this in mind, the manner of *writing back* that resulted in the rise of postcolonial literature, took place when colonized writers desired to shift the power balance by re-writing history and giving a voice to their version of colonization and its impact on their nation (Ashcroft, 2002). Following this, *A Small Place* is an example of *writing back* where Kincaid addresses how the actions of the British colonizers have impacted Antigua and also how the English language is “the language of the criminal” (1988:32). There are those who question the reliability of an author who utilizes a language that he or she is negative towards, but since the novel is written from the perspective of the colonized, it illustrates the connection between postcolonial literature and oppression; making it even more relevant to include the novel in ELT.

2.2 Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is relevant to this essay due to its relevance for second language development. To begin with, sociocultural theory is constructed on the notion that learning is a social process with a communicative direction. This is suitable for the intended novel based on the recommendations made by Chowdhury in the previous research section as she states that teaching literature should not be about providing information but should rather aim towards a more interactive classroom. Additionally, Olga Dysthe (2003) discusses how the sociocultural approach has two directions; one directed towards the historical and cultural contexts in learning and the other towards the connection between relationships and human interaction. In other words, learning and knowledge are not pre-set internal settings but are rather communicated between individuals. This means that these concepts are based on patterns created in society over a long period of time and that individuals are part of this process through interaction with each other. Moreover, this means that a student's preconceived notions about certain topics have been coloured by their interaction with their parents, friends, classmates, teachers and others who have had part in their learning process. With this in mind, a predicament arises when teaching postcolonial literature: the students' origin and the preconceived notions they have about the different issues raised in postcolonial novels could affect their understanding of such novels.

Furthermore, Dysthe refers to Lee Vygotskij, one of the most prominent pioneers in language development; according to him learning is mediated. There is no objective knowledge since it originates from information created by humans, hence leading to the mediation of knowledge. Eva Gagnestam (2003) explains this in depth by stating that a human's thinking has its foundation in how one creates different concepts. These concepts are reliant on one's environment, which in turn means that they are a social construct. According to Gagnestam the sociocultural theory views knowledge as a construct instead of a fixed truth and because of this, humans have to choose what type of knowledge they want to accumulate. Gagnestam also argues that a sociocultural perspective leads to viewing knowledge as a cultural feature. In turn, culture also becomes a human construct and is therefore free for interpretation, leading to the union of one's own culture and the culture of another in the interaction between humans (2003:25). When this occurs, a form of intercultural competence arises, where one becomes aware of other cultures and is able to understand the codes for communication in those cultures, making interaction more effective.

Language plays a significant role in the sociocultural approach and Dysthe mentions two of Vygotskij's theories with regard to second language development. One is called "the

zone of proximal development”, abbreviated to ZPD (2003:51). According to Vygotskij the width between a student’s ability to take on a task on their own and doing so with the guidance of a teacher is what creates the ZPD. It is in that zone where language development occurs through social interaction. This leads to gradual changes in a student’s thinking and behaviour, which heavily varies from culture to culture, and they develop a form of reality through mediation. The other is called “scaffolding” and indicates that those who are in the student’s surrounding, meaning the teacher and other students, are all responsible in the creation of an encouraging environment where language progress occurs by interacting with one another (2003:82). The role of the teacher is also mentioned by Hedge, who argues that when choosing a novel to use, the language teachers should evaluate “whether the picture it presents of the foreign language culture avoids stereotyping and gives an accurate reflection of the variety of people, lifestyles, settings, politics, and points of view that “one” culture can encompass” (2000:39). As stated in the introduction, the Western Canon does not supply a varied range of representations and needs to be complemented by bringing in literature that provides another or a wider perspective of issues such as colonialism. Hedge further argues that having an ethnocentric attitude, the idea that one’s culture is superior, correlates negatively with language learning due to the students connection to what is being taught (2000:20). That is why postcolonial novels such as *A Small Place* are a valuable addition to broadening the perspectives presented in the English language classroom and it challenges the hegemony of the Western Canon. In addition to this, the Swedish syllabus states that “Schools must help students to develop an identity that can be related to and encompasses not only what is specifically Swedish, but also Nordic, European, and ultimately global” (2011:4).

3. Literary Analysis

A Small Place is a criticism of the Antiguan government, Antigua's British colonial legacy and the tourist industry. There are two parts of the story, first the narrator talks about the typical tourism experience and how tourists look upon Antigua. After this the narrator discusses what colonial Antigua was like and how the colonial practices affect postcolonial Antigua. The novel gives a voice to, not only Antigua as a former colony, but also all former colonies and criticizes the colonizers by *writing back* to them and giving the colonized perspective, a view that is seldom told, of colonization (Ashcroft, 2002). The aim of this chapter is to highlight the main themes of *A Small Place*. The literary analysis is divided into subheadings that represent the aspects of the novel that are important to address for teachers in order for students to fully comprehend the content of *A Small Place*.

3.1 "You" in *A Small Place*

The novel is written in the second person and Kincaid uses this in a challenging manner since the reader becomes the novel's antagonist by being directly addressed as "you". This can be both confrontational and satisfying to readers since by being immersed into the novel the reader is better able to comprehend issues such as Antigua's colonial history and the tourist industry. The utilization of addressing the reader as "you" has an underlying function of displaying how it feels to be depicted in a stereotypical manner, a feeling that Antiguan are very accustomed to according to Kincaid. Readers are taken on a journey through Antigua, from the perspective of someone born and raised in a tourist destination, in order to gain more knowledge about the country. Since Kincaid addresses the reader as "you" throughout the novel, she reminds the reader that the injustice in Antigua is not over and that as a tourist "you" are part of the issues at stake, such as foreignness and "the Other".

...since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought...must never cross your mind. (1988:4)

Kincaid accuses the reader of their disregard for the bleak existence of Antiguan life: what you as a tourist adore about Antigua are the same things that make living there unbearable for the Antiguan. The only thing on your mind is how quaint and different everything is from

your own living conditions. “You” do not spend a thought on what it would be like to live under the same circumstances without the possibility to leave at any given moment. “You” travel to places that are “backwards in that charming way” and it makes “you” feel better that as a tourist, you are better off. Edward Said discusses this in *Orientalism*, where the Orient is negatively compared with the West as the non-European “Other” and given characteristics that illustrate the inferiority of the Orient and other colonies of the West. By addressing the reader Kincaid confronts them with this attitude of being superior towards non-Western countries. Said states that “too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent; it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of Orientalism has convinced me (and I hope will convince my literary colleagues) that society and literary culture can only be understood and studied together” (1978:28). This further exemplifies why *A Small Place* should be used in ELT because it questions and challenges the reader to reflect over the consequences of colonization and the tourist industry.

Another example of when Kincaid illuminates the advantages of being a tourist follows below:

You disembark from your plane. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European – to be frank, white – and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much needed cheap clothes and food for relatives, you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched. You emerge from customs into the hot, clean air: immediately you feel cleansed, immediately you feel blessed (which is to say special); you feel free (1988:4-5).

In this passage Kincaid’s narration of how North Americans or Europeans receive special treatment over Antiguans is a way of portraying another perspective in order for readers to understand the different sides of Antigua. It is possible that the use of “you” might alienate the reader, but it can also make the reader stay focused and be intrigued enough to find out more about Antigua, its history and political aspects, from the perspective of Kincaid. By addressing the readers as “you” they will look upon themselves not from the perspective of an outsider but from the perspective of the Antiguan natives.

3.2 Language in *A Small Place*

The language in *A Small Place* is used to illustrate how a language can give people confidence to achieve things or how it can just as easily destroy their confidence, in addition to how language can be used for the purpose of good or evil. The use of language demonstrates how the English used their language to control Antigua and the resentment the narrator has towards the colonizers even though English is now the native language of Antigua.

Since we were ruled by the English, we also had their laws. There was a law against abusive language. Can you imagine such a law among people for whom making a spectacle of yourself through speech is everything? (1988:25)

The censorship the Antiguan had to endure during the rule of the colonizers points towards the unwillingness of the English to communicate and a lack of understanding the people they had under their rule. Kincaid is trying to convey to the reader that when language is part of your identity, your whole being is stripped away when the language in question is taken away from you. If you cannot express yourself, then you are not able to be yourself. The very core of you is stripped away since language is an important part of any culture and it holds little resonances of the past within it.

For the language of the criminal can only contain the goodness of the criminal's deed. The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view. (1988:32)

The evidence of the power language has is contained within the above quote. Language shapes the way humans think about different matters and even though the narrator has repeatedly described how the colonizers have wronged the Antiguan, the words to fully depict these wrongs are not sufficient since it is done through the language of the oppressor. This yet again illustrates how colonialism still affects postmodern Antigua since the official language is English. Keeping this in mind, the colonizers have used their language to rewrite history, thereby changing the past through their language prowess. Said discusses how language can be used to “express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent and so forth” and this is also what Kincaid is trying to convey to the reader, that the language of the colonizer only communicates one side of the story and that you as a reader need to take this into consideration (1978:22).

3.3 Power in A Small Place

Throughout its history, rulers such as the English colonizers, the rich Barclay brothers and other authoritarians have governed Antigua. Kincaid seeks out the roots of the country's postcolonial issues with a candid approach. She argues that it is all but impossible for Antigua to have honest government officials because of the English colonial legacy and that the economic globalization has made Antigua an easy target for oppressors.

You may be the sort of tourist who would wonder why a Prime Minister would want an airport named after him-why not a school, why not a hospital, why not some great public monument? (1988:3)

The sarcastic tone of Kincaid clears up what is pointed out in the above passage, which is that the Prime Minister has no use of a hospital, a school or even a public monument. The reason for this is that tourists will not see those places and why should government officials spend money on building such places if *no one* will see them? It is evident that Kincaid is implicating the people in power, saying that they do not have the best interest of their own citizens at heart. The government continues to abuse their power by granting loans for cars, but not for houses. They do this because “the two main car dealerships in Antigua are owned in part or outright by ministers in government” (1988:7). The reader is told that the government uses its power for their own benefit and ignores the needs of the population. McLeod states how the official website of the Department of Tourism in Antigua welcomes the tourist by saying “Welcome to Antigua & Barbuda: The Caribbean You've Always Imagined” and that there is no mention of the natives and what they think about their country. There is only mention of different types of tourist attractions and sites. That somehow this imaginary Antigua is solely legitimized through the tourists (2008:79). Yet again showing how the government sets aside the natives for the benefit of the tourists.

...if you were to ask why you would be told that the banks are encouraged by the government to make loans available for cars, but loans for houses not so easily available;...Oh, but you are on holiday...would not really stir up these thoughts in you. (1988:7)

The reader is yet again told how the government uses its power to gain the respect and money of foreigners, not to mention how the people in power get their share on each one of these loans. Kincaid's sarcastic tone is also evident in the above passage because it begins with “if you were to ask” and ends it with since “you are on holiday” such thoughts will not occur and

you can go about having your vacation without a second thought on the significances of such actions. The way tourists are described shows that Kincaid implies that a tourist is someone that lacks sympathy and pays no attention to the circumstances of the natives of the country that they are visiting.

3.4 Shame and Anger in *A Small Place*

As previously mentioned, according to Edwards (2007), some critics claimed that the novel was distorted by Kincaid's anger. What they probably did not consider at the time was that the anger in novel was an intentional move by Kincaid to provoke the reader into becoming invested in the narration. An example of this is when Kincaid gives the following descriptions of tourists:

You see an incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed woman enjoying a walk on the beautiful sand, with a man, an incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed man;...(1988:13)

Kincaid employs this strategy of provoking the reader to feel anger to prove to them what it feels like being subjected to dehumanisation and not being able to identify with the characteristics that have been applied to you. By objectifying the tourist and exposing them Kincaid turns the tables around by reminding the reader of the consequences of colonization, exploitation, slavery and imperialistic oppression of Antigua.

Again, Antigua is a small place, a small island. It is nine miles wide by twelve miles long. It was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too long after, it was settled by human rubbish from Europe, who used enslaved but noble and exalted human beings from Africa (all masters of every stripe are rubbish, and all slaves of every stripe are noble and exalted; there can be no question about this) to satisfy their desire for wealth and power, to feel better about their own miserable existence, so that they could be less lonely and empty-a European disease. Eventually, the masters left, in a kind of way; eventually, the slaves were freed, in a kind of way. The people in Antigua now, the people who really think of themselves as Antiguan...are the descendants of those noble and exalted people, the slaves. (1988: 80-81)

The anger the narrator feels towards the colonizers is palpable in the above passage. How can they view Antigua as land that can be claimed and taken, when it was already inhabited? The

slaves are portrayed as “noble and exalted” while the colonizers are described as “human rubbish”. The descriptions are meant to shame the reader by pointing towards the oppression of the slaves and the ignorance of the colonizers. The reader, in the shape of a tourist, cannot escape the pain of the slaves and is driven to feel shame, because the feeling of shame implies putting the self into question. In turn, this could possibly lead to readers evaluating their beliefs and themselves. With this in mind, it could also mean that those who were once forced into slavery are still oppressed even though more than a hundred years have passed. McLeod also touches upon the anger in *A Small Place*, stating that the anger is used to show frustration and mourning. Claiming that it is a strategy employed by Kincaid to reimage the Antigua known by tourists and instead let the Antigua that is known by the natives claim its place in the rebuilding process of the nation (2008:80).

3.5 Reconciliation in *A Small Place*

In what can be seen as the second part of the novel, Kincaid moves towards addressing herself and the reader rather than only the reader. By doing so, Kincaid is shifting the tone of the conversation to one between acquaintances instead of adversaries.

And so you can imagine how I felt when, one day, in Antigua, standing on Market Street, looking up one way and down the other, I asked myself: Is the Antigua I see before me, self-ruled, a worse place than what it was when it was dominated by the bad-minded English and all the bad-minded things they brought with them? (1988:41)

This could be viewed as an invitation from Kincaid to the reader in joining the one-sided conversation that has been going on up until this point in the novel. At the same time the reader is not the one being under scrutiny. This time Kincaid is now addressing the Antiguan and their actions and how the legacy of colonialism continues to affect the country. The reason for the shift of tone could be that Kincaid first intended to illustrate the consequences of colonization and oppression and then make a turn to be more inclusive than accusatorial towards the reader. “And so you can imagine how I felt...”(1988:41) with this introduction Kincaid now assumes that the reader, having been told about the issues in Antigua, is able to feel the frustration and pain of the narrator. The reader now becomes part of the solution rather than the problem and is no longer an outsider but an insider.

Of course, the whole thing is, once you cease to be a master, once you throw off your master’s yoke, you are no longer human rubbish, you are just a human

being, and all the things that adds up to. So, too, with the slaves. Once they are no longer slaves, once they are free, they are no longer noble and exalted; they are just human beings (1988:81)

In the final passage Kincaid claims that even though slavery is horrid, the issue becomes even more complex when the slaves become free, because they are still coping with the burden of slavery. It can also be interpreted in a different manner, one that entails grounds for reconciliation between the reader (the tourist) and the Antiguan natives, as they are all “just human beings” (1988:81). Kincaid’s main objective with the novel is to demonstrate what colonization has done to Antigua and other colonies and aims towards a new political direction for Antiguan where they move away from corruption in the government and the tourist industry’s exploration of Antigua. In order for Antiguan to find peace and reconcile with their colonial past and postcolonial present they need to make their voices heard and by doing so finally finding justice.

3.6 Summary of Literary Analysis

Kincaid’s writing style is very precise throughout the novel; due to this precision she proves that she in fact has mastered the “language of the criminal” despite her resentment towards it. She goes from being proper, to casual and personal, alternating between the tones with superb accuracy. Because of her expertise it is never difficult to follow what is going on, even though there are numerous long paragraphs, making the novel a linguistically easy read. As mentioned in the introduction reading literature is beneficial for language development for several reasons, aside from improving one’s vocabulary, the reader becomes able to question facts and evaluate evidence. By reading *A Small Place* students will be presented with a perspective will challenge them to reflect and analyse their own ideas about the issues raised in the novel. The curriculum argues for the need of a historical perspective so that students are better equipped dealing with the present and the future and *A Small Place* is a great addition to the course material used in ELT because it covers the historical aspect as well as giving the students the opportunity to reflect over issues such as globalization, racism, exploitation and “the Other”.

The accurate language in *A Small Place* does not however make the content easy to interpret by the reader and Jane King, an author and also a native of Antigua, criticizes this in *A Small Place Writes Back* (2002).

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 the 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...(2002:894).

This passage can be interpreted as follows; King considers the writing style of Kincaid to be hostile because of the sweeping descriptions she makes of the tourists and their ancestors, implying that this will alienate the reader instead of getting them to sympathize with her cause. Even though King states that, as a native of Antigua, she shares many of the claims made in *A Small Place*, she cannot help feeling that she has a different attitude to the issues raised by Kincaid, “We are both writers from a small place, though I in smaller way-perhaps because I have stayed in my place, but then again perhaps not” (2002:886). King goes on to sarcastically comment on Kincaid’s name change “My writing name, however, is my own (maiden) name and its staccato single syllables do not roll off the tongue as melodiously as those Elaine Potter Richardson chose for herself” (2002:887). This could be an indication that King perceives Kincaid as a hypocrite for changing her names. But according to Edwards the name change was due to the fact that it gave Kincaid the liberty to write what she wanted while at the same time being a small nod to her complicated past as a “Caribbean woman who was marked by a British colonial educational system” (2007:2). Furthermore, King reflects on Kincaid’s intentions with writing *A Small Place*: if the purpose is to criticize the Antiguan government, colonialism and the tourist industry then why is Kincaid so filled with anger and hatred towards the Antiguan?

I look at this place (Antigua), I look at these people (Antiguans), and I cannot tell whether I was brought up by, and so come from, children, eternal innocents, or artists who have not yet found eminence in a world too stupid to understand or lunatics who have made their own lunatic asylum, or an exquisite combination of all three (1988:57)

King bases this on Kincaid’s move to the United States and that because of her newfound taste and wealth, she is now somehow entitled to make the same assumptions that she herself criticizes the colonizers of making about the Antiguan “Other” (2002:889). King’s statement could be interpreted as that Kincaid has lost her right to voice her dissatisfaction with Antigua

since she no longer is affected by events that are going on there and that Kincaid is writing about Antigua from the perspective of an outsider and not an insider. It is almost as if King would prefer it if Kincaid had stayed quiet and not written the novel at all. It is a question of who actually has the authority to tell the story of Antigua: the one that stayed or the one that left? Making this an interesting aspect to consider while teaching and reading the novel, since there are perspectives about the issues that Kincaid raises in *A Small Place* amongst the Antiguan natives that differ from the one presented by Kincaid.

4. A Small Place in the English language classroom

According to Collie and Slater, literature is not produced with the purpose of language teaching in mind. There has even been some controversy surrounding the topic of teaching literature in the English Foreign Language classroom before university level, which in turn has led to the ambivalence of teachers about including literature in EFL teaching. A reason for this was that “literature was thought of as embodying a static, convoluted kind of language, far removed from the utterances of daily communication” (1987:2), hence leading to the preconception that teaching literature should be taught at higher levels because the students would not have the sufficient skill sets to analyse the literature handed to them.

Another factor was that the cultural aspects that were raised in some type of literature were too difficult to handle in the EFL classroom and teachers sought out more neutral topics. But according to Collie and Slater, even though the teachers were ambivalent towards including literature in EFL, the students were more positive towards the notion. They base this on the argument that students are curious about the cultural practices of the country whose language they are learning and that literature provides a window into the social codes of the aforementioned country. Collie and Slater also write about how literature is coloured with emotion and that the students more easily can connect with texts that speak to their mind as well as their heart, making it a good complement for the other texts that are used in the language classroom (1987:2-3).

When it comes to reading *A Small Place*, most students in Sweden and other Western countries do not come from the same background as Kincaid and therefore cannot read the novel from the perspective of the author. They could very well feel being under attack for the oppression that they have had no part in only because they are “white” and European, they could even feel shame because of the direct approach of Kincaid’s writing style. That is why it is important that the motives for teaching and reading *A Small Place* should be made clear beforehand. In addition to aiding the students in accumulating the skill of remaining open-minded to the issues that Kincaid presents in the novel.

4.1 Why should *A Small Place* be used in the language classroom?

To begin with, literature is a good way to provide cultural information without having to go very far away. The vivid imagined world of literature can provide an alternative view of society and how certain ways of perceiving the world have been shaped. That is why

postcolonial literature is a good alternative to the depictions made in the Western Canon. According to the Swedish syllabus for English at upper secondary school, the teaching of English should give students the opportunities to understand spoken and written English, as well as interpret its content. They should also be able to communicate in English, both in writing and in speech. Moreover, students ought to have the ability to apply different language strategies in different contexts. Furthermore, students should be able to adapt language to serve for a variety of reasons, receivers and circumstances (Skolverket, *English*, 2011). With these skills in mind, *A Small Place* is a novel that will both challenge the students linguistically and emotionally based on the writing style of Kincaid and the provided perspective of colonization. By reading literature meant for native speakers of a language, students will become familiarized with the strategies that are employed in that language to convey irony, sarcasm, narration, argument and exposition, all of which can be found in *A Small Place*. This can inspire further development and further reading in that language (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Aside from the linguistic benefits of reading the novel, the most important aspect of the novel is the awareness its content brings about, because literature comes with a great deal of cultural information. In *A Small Place*, specifically, entertainment and knowledge are combined. When reading the novel, students will be able to step into the shoes of “the Other” and by doing so, questioning their own cultural heritage, history and society due to the previous erroneous depictions made in Western literature of “the Other”. The aim is to awaken an awareness to be critical of the knowledge handed down to them. Furthermore, the intention with reading and teaching *A Small Place* is in no sense meant to induce shame in the students; on the contrary it is meant to illustrate how English came about being one of the most used languages in the world and what impact colonization has had and still has on the world. Kincaid asks the reader “Do you ever try to understand why people like me cannot get over the past, cannot forgive or forget?” (1988:26), trying to make them understand how the exploitation of the colonies has only been beneficial for the colonizers. Due to this form of writing back students are given the opportunity to see colonization from the perspective of the colonized instead of from a Western perspective.

As most Western and Swedish students have been tourists, *A Small Place* will help them reflect over their role and how natives of the countries they visit might perceive them based on their historical and cultural background. A more international perspective is therefore needed when choosing the type of literature used in English language teaching. It is stated in the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school that “ an international perspective is

important to be able to understand one's reality in a global context and in order to create international solidarity...having an international perspective should also contribute to students' developing a greater understanding of cultural diversity within Sweden" (Skolverket, 2011:6). As discussed in the introduction, it is now more important than ever not to neglect literature that can broaden the perspectives of the students, because a wider perception of the world will aid students in acquiring critical knowledge and perhaps even in having a sense of empathy towards those who are in need or less privileged. What is even more important to consider is that there is always the possibility that a number of people will believe that reading *A Small Place* is an attempt to force certain beliefs about colonization on them. This makes it vital to clarify that the main objective is to make students aware that they should not solely depend on the depictions of "the Other" made by Western authors and seek out alternative versions in postcolonial literature such as *A Small Place*. At the same time it is good to keep in mind that some students might have difficulties simply reading the novel because the content is demanding to interpret without the proper tools, such as having an amount of previous knowledge about the issues raised and being able to reflect over the content without taking it personally (Chowdhury, 1992). This is why it is beneficial to work according to Vygotskij's ZPD approach, where the teacher takes the role of a supporting mentor in the process of the students' language development by providing the necessary tools to enable a better understanding of the novel, the issues that are addressed and more specifically, Kincaid's manner of writing back.

4.2 How can *A Small Place* be used in the language classroom?

The following section will offer a good way of teaching *A Small Place*, through collaborative learning that stretches over a period of time. It is not possible to cover all the aspects of the novel during one lesson or even a whole week of English lessons devoted to reading it. The novel might be brief compared to other conventional novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice* or *Jane Eyre*, but is not conventional in any manner. The issues of racism, inequality, foreignness, exploitation and colonialism are not meant to be discussed during one lesson and then brushed off during the next, it is an on-going process as is seen in the Swedish curriculum "Xenophobia and intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and *active measures*" (Skolverket 2011:4, italics mine).

As regards to the content, a framework for reading can be set up, where time does not have to be the main factor. According to Hedge, a framework that consists of three stages can be implemented when reading a novel. The first stage is pre-reading, followed by while-

reading and ends with post-reading (2002:209-211). The pre-reading stage is where the readers are tasked with familiarizing themselves with the author and her writing style by reading articles, related to the novel, written about or by Kincaid. Since Swedish students nowadays are comfortable with technology they can also view interviews with Kincaid on streaming services that provide video clips of such interviews. According to Collie and Slater a strictly teacher-centred approach does not encourage an interactive classroom where students will be able to share their opinions. Due to lack of interaction students will not have used the desired level of the target language (1987:8) and that is why a sociocultural approach is useful when teaching postcolonial literature. This is also stressed in the syllabus “Students should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and writing, and to produce spoken language and texts of different kinds, both on their own and together with others, using different aids and media” (Skolverket, English, 2011). Therefore it is useful that students form groups, each examining an aspect of Kincaid’s personal and professional life, be it her childhood, family, career or writing. They could look at the recurring themes in her novels, the tone and style she uses and which influences have affected them and why she changed her name when she aspired to become an author. By looking at the author’s background the students will gain a better understanding for her objectives behind *A Small Place* and “relate the content to their own experiences and knowledge” (Skolverket, English 2011).

Another factor that is important to look at in the pre-reading stage is what cultural knowledge can be gained from reading the novel. Based on my previous experiences with students the question “Why do we have to do this?” is frequently asked when they are introduced to topics they are not familiar or comfortable with. Since they now should have a good idea about who the author is and what she writes about, they could attempt to answer the question together by reflecting over the knowledge they have gained and trying to apply it when seeking out an answer (Skolverket, English, 2011). The role of the teacher in this stage could be to function as someone who guides the students in the group and class discussions about the main themes of the novel, such as the ones mentioned in the literary analysis chapter. By creating a mind map to illustrate the knowledge obtained in the pre-reading stage about the themes or other similar tasks will help the students present and share what they have learnt. Other options could be that each group does an oral presentation about the area of their choosing or posters that illustrate what they have discovered. According to the syllabus students are required to develop strategies to “take in and structure information in larger amounts of text or longer sequences of spoken language” (Skolverket, English, 2011).

The second stage in the reading framework is what students should do while reading *A Small Place*. A good example is that teachers could assign the students with tasks that encourage them to be active during reading. The purpose is to make reading an interactive process where students reflect on and react to the content that they are presented with in the novel (Hedge, 2002:210). What the teacher needs to stress at this stage is that the students think about Kincaid's way of conveying the story to the reader and how it makes the students feel to be directly addressed. Fortunately, the students should be well prepared for this since they have researched the author's background and writing style beforehand, so the initial reaction to the direct approach of Kincaid will not have the same impact as when the students would have started reading the novel without any preparation.

A suitable example of an interactive task could be that the students write a journal as a response to what they read. They could write about what happens in each chapter and the teacher should prompt them to consider what they find confusing or wonder about, describe their feelings and copy down quotes that they think are meaningful, offensive, weird or interesting, in addition to explaining why they feel or think a certain way. The syllabus states that students should produce written and spoken language where they "argue from different perspectives, apply reason, assess, investigate, negotiate and give reasons for their views" (Skolverket, English, 2011). That is why the teacher should guide the students towards looking at the issues that are raised and reflect over how they are presented and how it varies from the perception that they have had before reading the novel. This can be done by handing out a set of questions that the students should attempt to seek answers to while reading, such as: What issues do you question or think might not be correct? How might you verify it or find out more? Where can you find information about the issues that Kincaid addresses?

Another interesting task while reading, according to Collie and Slater, could be that the students are given a selection of interpretations of some of the passages from *A Small Place* that their classmates have written during their reading process. The interpretations are then gathered and handed out randomly among the students. They should all be given the chance to read a couple of interpretations in order to choose the one that is closest to their own perspective of the events that are described (1987:47). This could be a way of combining the students' resources to aid those who have difficulties reading between the lines in order for them to gain a better understanding of the novel. The syllabus also stresses that students should develop skills that help them "to understand implied meaning" (Skolverket, English, 2011).

The purpose of the final stage is to challenge the students to reflect on their initial response towards *A Small Place* while trying to answer questions that address the issues that Kincaid illustrates. They can do this by looking back at their individual journal entries and comparing them with those of other students in their groups. Initially, the groups can discuss how they reacted to Kincaid's representation of the colonizers, the tourists and "you". How are the people in power taking advantage of their station according to Kincaid? In what way did the British colonizers treat the Antiguan? Has the tourist industry only had negative effects on Antigua and its natives? How does the author's direct approach affect you as a reader and your feelings towards the novel?

Secondly, they can go on and look at how the issues of racism and inequality are addressed and discuss if the narrator's anger is justified? Could Kincaid have written the novel without the anger? Would the novel have been different if it was written from another perspective? Continuing, the language in *A Small Place* is handled masterfully and as Jane King argues it is very formal and correct (2002:885). The language structure is therefore another aspect of the novel the students should analyse in the post-reading stage. They could take the following factors into consideration, how did the English use language as a means to gain power? Why does the narrator have such a dislike for the English language? How does the alternation between formal and informal language effect the narration? What effect do the long paragraphs have on you as a reader?

When these parts have been covered, the students should now be ready to take on a larger task according to Hedge, who states that during the post-reading stage students should partake in activities where "they make use of what they have read in a meaningful way" (2002:211). An example of such an activity is a class debate where the groups can take on the roles of either the colonized or the colonizer and debate on the notions of power, language, colonialism, racism, tourism and inequality. With the previous exercises and the novel in mind, the students should have little difficulties coming up with arguments for either side by utilizing their combined knowledge. During their preparation for the debate they will get the opportunity to "develop their ability to think critically, examine facts and relationships, and appreciate the consequences of different alternatives" (Skolverket, 2011:5). Finally, the students will be able to see the connection between the actions of the colonizers and the consequences of colonization. By stepping into the shoes of either side they will become aware of that the construction of knowledge varies based on the background of the person conveying it.

5. Conclusion and final reflection

In conclusion, teaching postcolonial literature in the language classroom can give an opportunity to teach cultural awareness and critical thinking by taking in different perspectives in order to create discussions about heated subjects that are usually difficult to touch upon. It can also provide teachers with tools needed to include literature from outside the Western Canon and become conscious of Eurocentric tendencies, thereby challenging the depictions of some cultural groups in the Canon. Additionally it can provide ways to understand how colonization has formed economic and historical truths in today's Western society and be a valuable addition to the course material used in ELT. Because the choice of *A Small Place* can be a controversial one for some, this makes it even more relevant for teachers to include in ELT in Sweden. As previously stated, there is solid support in the curriculum and syllabus that illustrate the need for postcolonial literature such as *A Small Place* and therefor teachers should not shy away from using it in ELT.

By reading *A Small Place* students could be able to analyse topics such as racism, globalization and inequality. They will also have the opportunity to read a novel that is skilfully written and that presents stigmatized issues in a manner that makes it easy to grasp the content without the reader having difficulties understanding the language. This would have been problematic if the students had read about the issues in an academic text, where the language is more difficult to comprehend and not as captivating as in *A Small Place*. The students will see how Kincaid uses language to convey the perspective of a former colony that is now struggling with finding its own identity despite its colonial past and thereby learn new rhetorical strategies to improve their own writing.

The approach of teaching the novel by collaborative learning over a period of time has been based on Lee Vygotskij's language development theory, where the student has a support system that enables further language development through social interaction. By being in groups where the students discuss the issues in *A Small Place*, they will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge. This means that they will learn with and from each other. Smaller groups give students that are timid or shy the chance to voice their opinions and through the support of the group, even learn to do so in larger classroom discussions. The teacher becomes part of this support system by taking on the role of a mentor who guides the students in all the three stages of reading *A Small Place*.

Furthermore, students could become aware that postcolonial writers provide a window into a perspective, an experience or a culture that they otherwise would not have been able to access. It is not meant to prove that the postcolonial perspective is the correct one, but that there are other ways to look at the same issues and through this awareness become more critical towards the construction of one's reality.

One possibility for further research would be to visit upper secondary schools and conduct a study where teachers use postcolonial literature in their English language classroom to find out how students would receive *A Small Place* or a similar novel. Further research can be made by looking at what type of literature is being used in the English language teacher education programme at universities in Sweden and if this has any impact on the type of literature teachers go on in using their own classroom at upper secondary schools in Sweden.

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