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Burning Guys? How Upper-Secondary School English Language Teaching Textbooks Deal with Cultural Learning

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Abstract

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With a foundation in the course goals for the B Course in English at Upper-Secondary school, this essay will, by way of content and discourse analysis seek to investigate the representation of culture as it pertains to second language textbooks in general distribution. After defining the link between second language learning and cultural knowledge, the essay moves on to examine five different texts from British authors in three different textbooks. An analysis is made the texts themselves and their respective exercises to establish how cultural content is integrated and enacted.

The study found a number of texts that would represent British culture in narrow terms of culture as great works of art. It found less evidence that textbook publishers seriously engaged with culture-as-behaviour, concluding that textbook writers preferred to universalise the messages and subject matter of the texts - that is texts remained merely as vehicles for linguistic comprehension, rather than as sources of cultural knowledge.

This has implications for teachers who may not get the help they need from textbooks in the deciphering and formulation of cultural knowledge; it raises questions about how teachers involved in teaching English should be trained and be made aware of the lack of cultural promotion in their resources.

1.Introduction

One of the fundamental values emphasised in Lpf 94 (the document that regulates the voluntary Swedish Upper-Secondary School organisation) is that of cultural awareness. "The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place great demands on people's ability to live together and appreciate the values that are to be found in cultural diversity."[1] As one of the goals for English taught at secondary school level this value is made more explicit as students are expected to "reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures."[2] The place of English as both a world language and as a specific target culture is firmly established in the curriculum. One would expect that textbooks produced for the relevant courses would reflect that need – that need for cultural understanding. This essay is designed to investigate just that, as well as provide an overview of the relationship between language and culture.

1.2 Background

The majority of teachers teaching English in Sweden are Swedish, and have been educated and cultured accordingly. Hardly controversial but that very fact provokes the thought about how well cultural awareness, knowledge of English-speaking cultures and what interpretations of "foreign" cultural symbols are being taught in language classes in Sweden? Given the still central place of textbooks in classroom environments, one may expect to find that culture plays a strong part in textbook design, both as an aid to teachers and to students. Textbook usage in Sweden is not regulated by any central agency, and teachers are generally free (within a budget) to make recommendations and orders for resources that they think are suitable. This act of consumption can be seen as a practical acceptance of the message relayed in those textbooks. In other words, teachers may believe they are covering course requirements by their consumption of textbooks but what they are actually doing is reinforcing a particular discourse, a discourse that may not be as helpful as it could be. V Robinson[3] for example, talks in general terms of the need to distinguish between theories of belief from theories-in-use, where the actions of the agents involved indicate the practised beliefs of those agents. The use of and continued marketing and consumption of textbooks surely provide evidence of the theories-in-use of the educational establishment as a whole and teachers making decisions about the use of textbooks in their classroom.

1.3 Goal

Combining qualitative analysis techniques with appropriate theoretical tools, this essay will investigate and illuminate if and how cultural knowledge is presented in textbooks designed for upper-secondary study of English, given the specific goals concerning the cultures of English-speaking countries.

1.4 Questions

What are the links between culture and language, and specifically what is the interplay between them when it comes to second language learning?
How do teaching resources deal with cultural understanding?

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[1] Lpf94, 1:1,p3. The Englsih version can be found at Skolverket's website.
[2] (http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0708&infotyp=8&skolform=21&id=EN&extraId=).
[3] Robinson. V. *Problem Based Methodology*. Oxford. 1993. Pergamon Press.

Do textbooks actually engage with the goals of the syllabus and teach target country cultural knowledge?

What may be improved upon, what do the discursive practices of textbook production exclude?

2.Method

Along with an outline of the tools used to analyse the textbooks in question, the validity and reliability of the essay and method will be examined. To begin with an analytical framework for the essay will be established.

The set-up of the teaching programme at Gothenburg University means that students spend time in different faculties across the campus but find themselves specialising at one institution, as they focus on their preferred subject. This does provide a catholic education and exposes the student to a variety of writing techniques and formats, as each faculty prefers one format to another. It does however mean that the final essay is formatted in a way that the student might not be altogether comfortable with. This author for example has specialised in the English Department and literature in particular, which takes a differing view of methodology and format to the Sociology and Teaching faculties. There the emphasis is less on the format of the essay, and more with writing. While all the elements of a more formal structure are there (method, theory, etc) in an English Literature C essay, there is not the slavish devotion to fitting such work into appropriate sections. Of course the object of study is different and different genres of literary texts require differing approaches.

As such it may be inaccurate to talk of methodologies here, rather perhaps tools. The tools that will be employed here may seem a little loose compared to the more rigid methodologies employed in other essays, being as it is, based on discourse and content analysis (see below). These rely most simply on the sensibility of the reader and his or her reactions to what is in a text.

2.1 An Analytical Framework

Any academic work needs a boundary, a limitation to the study object. For this essay it is a framework adapted from pioneering work done thirty years ago for the United Nations educational program. In the 1970's, collaboration between the Georg Eckert Institute in Germany and UNESCO led to the publication of a book called *The UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision.* Its author, Falk Pingel, outlined an analytical framework to be borne in mind when researching textbooks and educational material. The full framework looks like this

- ❑ Textbook sector components:

    - Educational system

    - Guidelines/curriculum

    - Adoption procedures

    - Structures of publishing houses

- ❑ Formal criteria:

    - Bibliographic references

- Target group (school level, type of school)

- Dissemination

❑ Types of texts/mode of presentation:

- Author's intentions (if specified)

- Descriptive author's text (narrative)

- Illustrations/photos/maps

- Tables/statistics

- Sources

- Exercises

❑ Analysis of content:

- Factual accuracy/completeness/errors

- Up-to-date portrayal

- Topic selection/emphasis (balance)/representativeness

- Extent of differentiation

- Proportion of facts and views/interpretation

❑ Perspective of presentation:

- Comparative/contrastive approach

- Problem-oriented

- Rationality/evocation of emotions[4]

In this essay not all of those criteria are applicable or given the limited resources and time available, practicable. By scaling it down somewhat, this essay will be concern itself with the textbook sector components as they relate to guidelines and curriculum and make selections from different publishing houses (; textbooks from different publishing houses). The target group will be delineated (designed for the B course, "formal criteria"), and there will be different types of texts and modes of presentation investigated. The analysis of content will be carried out using accepted methodological tools (see below) and problem-oriented perspectives will be tackled.

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[4] Pingel, F. *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*. (1999) Hannover, Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung . p.48

2.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis seeks to extract in a formal and educated way those interpretations of the text, which the text itself contains. It "involves analysis of the content of communication (documents) as a basis of inference."[5] This lends itself open to an immediate charge of subjectivity; that anyone can read a text and put forward whatever interpretation they want, without that "experiment" on the text being repeatable. At the same time, it leaves the field open to imaginative questions, exhaustive interpretation of words, patterns and themes within a text that other methodologies, because of the boundaries imposed by that methodology, may not get to analyse.

Usually content analysis is concerned with identifying a target word and scanning through the text in order to establish statistical information about how many timers the word appears. For the purposes of this essay texts will be analysed for signifiers that match or are judged to meet the cultural criteria set out below in chapter 5. In other words, the texts are analysed for names, gestures, habits or behaviours that signify something other than their syntactical position in a sentence and used to form the basis of a cultural analysis. Perhaps the tool could be called a semiotic content analysis to make it more focused and accurate.

2.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis allows a researcher to ask questions of what is not there. Discourse analysis does not claim to give definitive answers to strictly focused scientific enquiry, rather it provides opportunity to go behind and beyond assumptions made in the formulation of texts and tasks associated with those texts. Discourse analysis does not claim to solve specific results to questions such as what is the speed of light, but it does seek to expose the conditions that led to the question being asked. Why are some texts or themes not included; what were the reasons for this text and not that text, this question but not that one could be examples of discursive analytical questions?

What is meant by discourse though? In the first instance then discourse is the way in which language is used and constructed (the semiotic or signifying elements) to create meaning. The second use of the term is more problematical, and refers to the way in which social life is represented, most often in terms of institutional or organised life and what hidden rules are in force to enable or disable what is allowed to be spoken of. Norman Fairclough is a leading light of the Critical Discourse Analysis scene and he has two main meanings

> The term 'discourse' is used in various ways within the broad field of discourse analysis. Two are of particular relevance here. First, 'discourse' in an abstract sense as a category which designates the broadly semiotic elements (as opposed to and in relation to other, non-semiotic, elements) of social life (language, but also visual semiosis, 'body language' etc). I prefer to use the term 'semiosis' (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2004) to avoid the common confusion of this sense of 'discourse' with the second, which I retain: 'discourse' as a count noun, as a category for designating particular ways of representing particular aspects of social

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[5] Basturkman, Helen. *A Content Analysis of Elt Textbook Blurbs: Reflections of Theory-in-Use*. RELC Journal 1999; 30; 18

life. The category of 'discourse' in this second sense is defined through its relation to and difference from two other categories, 'genre' and 'style'.[6]

By using both content and discourse tools, one to look at the foreground of a text and one to assess its background, the approach towards the evidence in the textbooks is as free as possible, unhampered by ideological concerns, free from the constraints of the textbook itself, unbounded by methodological constraints, giving the researcher and reader ample room to enquire and investigate. The combination of the tools allows an analyst to look at the specific and the general, the parts and the whole simultaneously.

2.4 Reliability

Whilst reliability and validity are not terms usually associated with an investigation that relies on hermeneutics (the interpretation of texts) because of that subjective quality talked about above, it is pertinent to make some points both about the methods used and the idea of asking the questions on the first place. Chapters 2.4 and 2.5 attempt to do just that.

Firstly it must be said that what is being analysed in this essay is a product designed *for* language teachers, and not an investigation of attitudes, didactic practices etc of teachers themselves. Any conclusions therefore cannot be applied to a teaching body as a whole, rather they must be taken as the result of the evidence used.

The choices of methodological tools are those that are acknowledged by Pingel's book and readily acceptable throughout the humanities and social sciences. Having said that, they still rely on a certain element of subjectivity, no matter how informed, and a common accusation is that neither tool provides scientific fact but rather inferences.

Given the abstract and complicated nature of the term "culture" (see below) it is possible that another researcher with a different attitude or definition may come up with a different set of conclusions. For instance if one were to link culture solely with Capital-C-culture then B-Course textbooks do contain wide ranges of cultural artefacts with which to fulfil course curriculum goals. If as is the case here, culture is defined as both big- and small-c-culture, then perhaps again the results will be different.

Having said that, the different categories of cultural manifestations are clearly set out; the analytical framework is valid; the texts are varied and the sample is large enough to draw conclusions and small enough to be manageable given the essay's format; and the texts are freely available to study, meaning the reader can be confident that the essay is reliable.

2.5 Validity

This essay's validity can be defended in two ways. As a validation on a wider level, the goals set out in the National Curriculum and Lpf94 clearly state the need for cultural understanding and specifically knowledge of the cultures of English speaking countries. As will be demonstrated below, the use of the textbook remains the primary resource within the language classroom. It is therefore valid to expect those textbooks to reflect the goals of the syllabus, and indeed they all claim, in some form or other, to do just that.

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[6] http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/critdiscanalysis.doc (unpag)

As to the internal validity of the essay itself then, the place of culture in the syllabus will be established, as will the extent to which textbooks remain the primary resource in language classrooms. The essay will outline the criteria for investigating cultural semiotics and how the exercises are looked – thus giving ample evidence from fifteen texts to make some conclusions about cultural education in foreign language learning.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The empirical evidence for this essay comes from an analysis of textbooks so in that sense there are no ethical considerations to make. Arguments, research and points of view that are somebody else's product have been duly acknowledged throughout the essay.

2.7 Execution

This essay has involved extensive research firstly of the links between culture and language. Having decided to focus on culture where it specifically overlaps with language acquisition, research was started on the main issues involved there. This was followed by research into the course curricula and goals for English at Upper Secondary level. The selection of textbooks was made on the basis of resources that were familiar to the author from practical experience gained during VFU placements carried out during the course of the teacher training. A suitable analytical framework was discovered and relevant research tools investigated.

A text was chosen from, as far as possible, a different section in each textbook and limits were set on the authors' country of background (Great Britain) and categories of culture symbolised by certain phrases or patterns were to be highlighted. In this way texts and their exercises would give a general picture of the whole of the textbook and not just representative of a certain chapter. This could otherwise lead to suspicions that different sections within the book have different formats.

3. Curriculum goals and Textbook Usage

To begin with, there will be a brief introduction to the aims of the Curriculum as it relates to English B, followed by a look at the usage of textbooks in English language classrooms in Sweden.

3.1 The National Curriculum

The aim of the English language teaching is set out in the course goals and syllabi for the three levels of English taught at the Upper Secondary level in Sweden. These are legally binding goals that all schools offering such courses must adhere to, although local interpretation is encouraged. The goals themselves are non-prescriptive in terms of how they are met. The overall aim for the English course is specified as below

> English is the mother tongue or official language of a large number of countries, covering many different cultures, and is the dominant language of communication throughout the world. The ability to use English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds. The subject of English thus plays a central role in the Swedish school. The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts, and an increasingly internationalised labour market, in order to take advantage of the rapid developments taking place, as a result of information and communications technologies, as well as for further studies. The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures.
>
> It should, in addition, lead to the language becoming a tool for learning in different areas of knowledge. All pupils also need the ability to further develop their knowledge on completion of schooling. In addition, the subject aims at pupils maintaining and developing their desire and ability to learn English.[7]

There are three levels of English taught, beginning with A and ending in an optional course at C level. English B aims to build on work done in the A course and is a deeper and more analytical course. Extracts from literature are longer and more complicated, with more situational and reflective practice. Very explicit reference is made to "familiarity with English-speaking cultures [being] developed."[8] As was mentioned in the introduction, there are specific goals as far as culture is concerned. Students should be encouraged to, "reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures."[9]

3.1.2 Communicative Competence

In the last three decades, the idea of "communicative competence" has come to dominate theories of L2 (second language acquisition). Originally coined by Dell Hymes, an American sociologist and linguist, the term has come to mean a way of approaching the L2 by means of a holistic approach to language, where the traditional skills cannot be isolated from each other

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[7] http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0708&infotyp=8&skolform=21&id=EN&extraId= (unpag)

[8] ibid (unpag)

[9] http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0708&infotyp=8&skolform=21&id=EN&extraId= (unpag)

– in other words, linguistic ability cannot be separated from the skill in using the language. It recognises that being good at filling in missing words, or being good at translations has less value if those skills are not combined with oral and listening skills too. As Tricia Hedge sums it up, "the communicative approach in ELT [English Language Teaching] encompasses all modes of language use. It has, as one of its bases, a concept of what it means to know a language and to be able to put that knowledge to use in a communicating with people in a variety of setting and situations".[10] This approach is in contrast to approaches of language learning based on, for example, learning through listening, or learning through grammar. The goal of communicative competence is the usage of all four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), in combination to express language in a way that goes beyond the more formal language learning systems that preceded it.

3.1.3 Some Words on Intercultural and Multicultural Awareness

There is a caveat to the goal as it relates to culture in 4.1. Following the words about Englsih-speaking cultures, it talks of developing "greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures." The curriculum (indeed LPf as a whole) is keen to promote the ideas of cultural understanding and respect for other ways of interpreting and enacting behaviours and customs. This subdivision of culture is of great importance to the language teacher – and research into just what multi- and interculturalism means is an expanding topic. It is a topic that will not be covered here. This essay will concern itself with the expectation that students learn about cultures of English-speaking countries and how that goal is met within resources specifically written to meet those course requirements.[11]

3.2 The Use of Textbooks in Language Classrooms

The use of textbooks in English language classrooms is prolific in both international terms and in Sweden. As Hutchinson and Torres point out in an article for the ELT Journal, "the textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in [various] countries…No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook."[12] David Litz, in an article for the Asian EFL Journal, gives a concise overview of the advantages of using textbooks,

> Haycroft (1998), for example, suggests that one of the primary advantages of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when we use them. Second, as Sheldon (1988) has pointed out, students often harbor expectations about using a textbook in their particular language classroom and program and believe that published materials have more credibility than teacher-generated or "in-house" materials. Third, as O'Neill (1982) has indicated, textbooks are generally sensitive to students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them, they are efficient in terms of time and money, and they can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation. Fourth, textbooks yield a respectable return on investment, are relatively inexpensive and involve low lesson preparation time, whereas teacher-generated materials can be time, cost and quality defective. In

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[10] Hedge, Tricia. *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom.* Oxford. 2003. p45

[11] For more on intercultural knowledge see work by Byram, specifically *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters. 1997

[12] Hutchinson, T. and E. Torres. 1994. 'The Textbook as Agent of Change'. ELT Journal. Volume 48/4. p.315

this way, textbooks can reduce potential occupational overload and allow teachers the opportunity to spend their time undertaking more worthwhile pursuits (O'Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988). A fifth advantage identified by Cunningsworth (1995) is the potential which textbooks have for serving several additional roles in the ELT curriculum. He argues that they are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.[13]

In a report for Skolverket published in 2006, entitled *Läromedlens roll i undervisning* evidence was produced to show how widespread the use of textbooks was. Although the study was aimed at primary and lower secondary school levels, the results showed that more than three-quarters of teachers use a textbook every lesson and the experience of the teacher plays a significant roll in how widespread that usage is (teachers with more than 10 years experience used textbooks more whilst teachers with less than 3 years in the job used them less). Another interesting conclusion was that teachers (presumably including those more than 75% who did use a textbook every lesson) felt that it hindered spontaneity in the classroom and that the textbook ended up controlling the lesson at the expense of student desires or the teacher's own ideas.[14]

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[13] http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Litz_thesis.pdf
[14] Rapport 284. 2006 *Läromedlens roll i undervisningen* at www.skolverket.se

4.Historical Trends in Research

In this section, the general direction of research as it relates to the study of textbooks, checklists for making informed choices about textbook selection and a historical overview of teaching cultural components in language classrooms. Further research is included in the sections on culture in Chapter 5.

There has been much work done on textbook analysis and numerous checklists have been produced to help teachers in filtering and selecting appropriate books for use in the foreign language classroom. Given the huge amounts of textbooks produced for English language learning and the different course goals and socio-political discourses in which they are produced, there can be little generic value in advancing one checklist over another. However one of the leading researchers on textbook analysis L. Sheldon has produced a comprehensive list that is widely accepted as valuable. It runs to over 17 main criteria, which in turn have numerous sub-criteria with which to enable a teacher to select their primary teaching resource. Some of the main criteria include the textbook's rationale (why was it written for example?); the availability of the book; how is it targeted; is the layout conducive to study and does it have a good mixture of text, pictures, tables etc? One of the most pertinent sections is on cultural bias. Sheldon enquires, "are different and appropriate religious and social environments catered for…are accurate or 'sanitised' views of the USA or Britain presented; are uncomfortable social realities (e.g. unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns, racism) left out?"[15] These concerns are reflected in the goals for this essay but historically that has not always been the case.

The contemporary issue of linkage between culture and language will be established in section 5 but the history and research between the two has not been one of unanimity. Critics of such symbiosis (such as L Smith[16] and C Alpetkin[17]) consider the role of English as a World language. If language is inherently tied to culture, and culture carries values and hierarchies that may be economically or ideologically repulsive to the learner then a universal culture must be constructed. Failing that, language must remain at an instrumental level. In other words, it is possible to teach grammar, syntax, and ways to use English as a tool, as an instrument, without the need for cultural knowledge, as portrayed by the Anglo-Saxon world.

However as Peter Sysonov claims, "systematic introduction of "Culture Studies" into L2 curriculum traces back to the early 20th century, when Shweiter and Simonet (1921) argued about the necessity of including "a system of basic information" into L2 teaching. The system they proposed included general information about geography, history, customs, traditions, holidays and rituals of an L2 country."[18] His book traces the development throughout the 20th century citing Robert Lado, an American linguist who took the position that L2 learners had to learn the culture of their target language in order to fully master that language. His work however came about at the time of listening- and grammar-based approaches to foreign language acquisition, approaches which were instrumental in the extreme.

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[15] Hedge, Tricia. *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom.* Oxford. 2003. pp367-372
[16] Smith, L. (1976). English as an international auxiliary language. RELC Journal, 7(2), 38-43
[17] Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal* 56 (1), 57-64
[18] http://sysoyev.org/DOC/003.html (unpag)

The rise of communicative competence as the pre-eminent second-language learning theory, complicated matters between language and culture. Even if communicative competence had a socio-cultural basis, culture was either perceived as a static, homogenous entity with emphasis on literature or capital-C culture (see below); or was diluted to such an extent that the term culture was so broad as to be universal. Texts could be set anywhere. As Alan Pulverness notes, "Content was important as a source of motivation, but it was seen as equally important to avoid material which might be regarded as 'culture-bound'. Throughout the late 1970s and much of the 1980s, syllabus design and materials writing were driven by needs analysis and culture was subordinated to performance objectives"[19] He goes on, "many publishers and course book writers understandably continue to heed these words – at best producing materials centred on topics with a fairly broad trans-cultural appeal, but at worst resulting in materials which could be set anywhere. Very often, culture-specific content seems to have been carefully screened out of the material, so that settings are rendered bland and colourless.[20]

Recent research has shown that this trend is being reversed. This is reflected in the inclusion of the specific goal in Lpf 94 and the curriculum goals of 2000. Interest is growing in adapting and integrating behavioural culture (see below) in second-language acquisition even if as Pulverness further notes,

> That although interest has been growing in 'little c' culture and the ways in which it is manifested through linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour, the coverage of these areas in coursebooks has rarely got beyond the incidental and the anecdotal. The cultural assumptions, the shared frame of reference, the social contexts in which language operates, are what get lost in the translation from language user to language learner. In teaching English for communication and neglecting culture, we may actually be giving learners access to an impoverished means of communication, effective for survival and for routine transactions, but lacking much of the cultural resonance that makes it fully meaningful for native speakers[21]

It is within this atmosphere that this investigation further gains its validity.

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[19] http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/elt/forum/bsandefl.htm (unpag)
[20] ibid
[21] ibid

5. Theories of Culture and Definition of Categories

Although it is customary to use the results section to introduce evidence and the discussion section to analyse those results, it is necessary to pin down the concept of culture almost immediately. Firstly this gives the reader the information and definitions of culture to be examined. Secondly, this section will highlight the linkage between language and culture and thus answer one of the main questions of the essay.

In this section then the problems of defining key terms will be addressed as well as introducing the criteria for content analysis.

5.1 Culture

Culture, like many abstract concepts found at the core of many academic topics such as democracy, freedom, terrorism and love, suffers from a lack of clear definition. It is one of those concepts that is gleefully claimed to have hundreds of different definitions, and as such could be claimed to be almost unusable in any sense of academic discourse. Any attempt to use culture as a basis for any sort of scientific investigation has to be aware of the arbitrary nature of the word, how it is used across a wide variety of academic disciplines and the reader has to be alerted to what is going to be signified by the use of that concept. It has to be said that just because a term suffers from clear characterisation it does not necessarily follow that it is worthless as an analytical concept.

Claire Kramsch, a language professor at Berkeley, is one of the leading figures in the area of linkage between culture and language acquisition. She makes the point that culture, despite the number of singular definitions abounding in books and articles everywhere, can be reduced to two major areas. The first has its origins in the humanities, "it focuses on the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artefacts of everyday life, and the mechanisms for their reproduction and preservation through history"[22]. This would cover what can be called the MLA approach (Music, Literature and Art of a country) or culture-with-capital-C. Looked at in this way, the assumption is that knowledge of a country's literary canon and an acquaintance with the great artists (of whatever art) of a target nation, aids in the language acquisition of that country.

The second area could be called little-c culture. This derives from the social sciences, and as Richard Brislin says, "refers to widely shared ideals, values, formation and uses of categories, assumptions about life, and goal-directed activities that become unconsciously or subconsciously accepted as "right" and "correct" by people who identify themselves as members of a society."[23] This is the use of culture to describe human life; to uncloak the invisible mantle of daily rituals, traditions and behavioural constraints. Quite simply is a way to explain why things are done the way they are. Immediately one can realise the difficulties in terms of scale, complexity and alienation between native and target culture in having a textbook presenting such information coherently.

Kramsch then develops a third component of culture, that of the metaphor or imagination.

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[22] http://www.spz.tu-darmstadt.de/projekt_ejournal/jg-01-2/beitrag/kramsch2.htm (unpag)
[23] Brislin, Richard. *Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 1990. p.11

"Teaching culture means therefore teaching not only how things are and have been, but how they could have been or how else they could be. Neither history nor ethnography provide this imaginative leap that will enable learners to imagine cultures different from their own. Breaking down stereotypes is not just realising that people are not the way one thought they were, or that deep down "we are all the same" [---] In addition to history and social science, culture is therefore also literature, for it is literature that opens up "reality beyond realism" and that enables readers to live other lives — by proxy."[24]

For the purposes of this essay, and avoiding then the inevitable struggle with numerous definitions, culture will be used as a representation along three different axes, one aligned along a diachronic line, tracing the historical capital-C cultural product of the UK. The second axis is the synchronic aspect of culture, how British culture is represented now. The third axis is that of the imagination, the use of literature to show what could have been, to celebrate the uniqueness of not just the cultural product but also the reader's response to it. The texts chosen may be of a historical nature or span different eras or different subject matters but their very coexistence within a single textbook creates a synchronic discourse in itself. As Basturkman puts it, "ELT textbooks are cultural artefacts. They are a genre of some prominence, usually reflecting mainstream views of the ELT community, or culture. The views are reflected in the selection made from an array of methodological and course content options in the field at a point in time."[25]

5.2 Culture And The Link Between Language Acquisition

One truism of culture in whatever form it takes, is that of the symbiotic relationship with language. The acquisition of foreign languages historically was a tool to read and interpret great works of religious or educational purposes. Kramsch again,

We all know how up until recently, the sole rationale for the teaching of modern languages was access to the "great works", the universal canon of world literatures. Literature, like the Holy Scriptures or Cicero's oratories, ensured a certain cosmopolitan, at first religious, then aesthetic, view of the world that various speakers of various languages could share across social and national boundaries. Translations and explications de textes ensured exquisite attention to shades of textual meaning that were neatly enclosed within their own worlds of semantic reference.[26]

This is the use of language to enter into a universal culture and it is a process that could be argued to be continuing today, given the dominant position of English in world affairs. In order to be published in the academic world, in order to be understood on the Internet, to trade, or to mediate, knowledge of English is needed. The targets of exegesis have developed from the Bible and Classical texts, and been replaced by the doctoral thesis, international treaties, laws and contracts.

The position in the 20th Century has been less clear as we have seen. Culture and language learning have not always gone hand in hand. Work done by writers such Wittgenstein, Saussure and most prominently Foucault, along with the huge explosion of interdisciplinary

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[24] http://www.spz.tu-darmstadt.de/projekt_ejournal/jg-01-2/beitrag/kramsch2.htm (unpag)

[25] Basturkman, Helen. *A Content Analysis of Elt Textbook Blurbs: Reflections of Theory-in-Use*. RELC Journal 1999; 30; p20

[26] http://www.spz.tu-darmstadt.de/projekt_ejournal/jg-01-2/beitrag/kramsch2.htm (unpag)

studies and collaborations between linguists, anthropologists and sociologists seem to have settled the matter for now. As N Pachler puts it, "in order to understand language fully and use it fluently, learners need not only linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and strategic competence but also socio-cultural and world knowledge"[27]. This is because, "language is both, part of culture as well as the medium by which culture is defined and described."[28] This can be at the level of the idiomatic phrase, specific to the target language (on the synchronic axis) or could be the deciphering of a Shakespearean sonnet (diachronic). It can be in the use of "please" and "thank-you" (entering into social discourse) or understanding why around November British people wear red poppies or burn effigies of someone called Guy.

5.3 Expressions of Culture

Work done by Hofstede during the 1960's and 1970's, and Kramsch (covered above) is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the varying ways culture manifests itself. The following is at once a summary and builds on their work. This section also gives the specific criteria for coding each passage selected in the textbooks

Culture is a multi-dimensional concept, which is to be found at various places within a target location. Within a community it may manifest itself at a geographical level or as differing levels within that community. If we are talking geographically, there may be differences between national cultures - that nations have an inherent culture that signifies their otherness towards each other. Alan Pulverness, writing for *Modern English Teacher*, points out that,

> The British are uncomfortable with the word itself: it was only with the advent of the Labour government in May 1997 that the Department of National Heritage was renamed the Department for Culture, Sport and the Media; in France civilisation forms part of language studies, in Italy it is civiltà, in Germany and Austria Landeskunde, but in Britain it is still background studies.[29]

This reinforces difficulties in providing an ontological description of culture, but also gives a hint as to the more modern view of culture as heterogeneous, that we should be talking about cultures not culture. Within national boundaries, one can contrast the national picture of a country, with that of regional and local levels. Within those regions we can also discern still further layers of culture based on gender, generational and class levels. Indeed this could apply to almost any country to varying degrees. Certainly Sweden, often thought of as a very homogenous society, provides numerous opportunities to highlight cultural levels. That however shifts focus away from our goals here – the course curriculum specifically highlights knowledge of English-speaking cultures. One may expect then to see a move away from universal values to specific knowledge about regional Britain; literature that highlights class issues in Britain, historical representations of local cultures and gender issues that give such knowledge.

At whatever level of cultural expression one is investigating, it is certainly possible to discern markers that signify patterns, or clues about a target culture. These may come in varying forms of importance. This essay will use four distinct manifestations of culture.

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[27] Pachler, N. (1999) (ed) Teaching mfl at advanced level. London: Routledge, p78
[28] ibid
[29] http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/elt/forum/bsandefl.htm (unpag)

Symbols of culture may be images, flags or even hand gestures that may hold a particular significance to those within a cultural group. They are often the most fragile of expressions of culture, readily accessible to other cultural groupings, even to the extent of other cultures assimilating them into their cultures. An example may be the Union flag, which was appropriated by variously skinhead/right-wing extremists and the fashion industry, not just in Great Britain but abroad too.

Heroes or paradigms of behaviour, personalities that embody what is good or serve as internalising expression of what is moral or heroic about a culture, can also serve as expressions of culture. Winston Churchill, symbolising the never-say-die attitude of the English or bravery in the face of overwhelming odds could be an example. Again to draw attention to the fluid nature of these sorts of expression, one is entitled to query the behaviour of a large number of people after the death of the Princess of Wales and how that public mourning and overt display of emotion squares with the cultural image or stereotype of the British.

The collective activities of a culture, its *rituals* are another expression of a culture. We have mentioned the wearing of poppies and the burning of effigies, these are examples of what a cultural ritual may be. Remembering the dead of various wars that British armed forces have been involved in has created a cultural ritual that may not be apparent to those who cannot decipher the significance of a red poppy pinned to a jacket. How to interpret the burning of a stuffed effigy in celebration/remembrance of a man who tried to blow up Parliament 400 years ago, at a time when Britain is involved in the Global War on terror may also need some interpretation!

At the core of cultural expressions are the values a culture adheres to. What is considered good, morally acceptable to a certain group of people? These are often intangible, only revealing themselves as reactions to certain situations, such as attitudes to certain acts of criminal behaviour; lack of social awareness (for example, the reaction to someone who does not say thank you or please) or even what makes people laugh.

These expressions would generally fit along Kramsch's synchronic axis - they are mutable, and they are not fixed. As such it may be too much to ask for a textbook to seriously engage with them. But they are important to bolster language acquisition in the way that cultural awareness and language skills are linked.

5.4 Final Thoughts on Culture

Culture can be defined in hundreds of ways, and by different academic actors. For this essay's purpose culture has firstly been defined as a historical product that symbolises how a grouping of people represent themselves in their arts and literature. Secondly culture is a set of behaviours and expressions that show how life actually is - culture as behaviour if you will. A third axis is how a culture imagines, how things should be, the culture of imagination. When examining the texts then, the focus will be on all three of those axes, looking for evidence of symbols, heroes, values and rituals of culture - that is manifestations of culture. Secondly the essay will look for layers of culture - that is national, regional, class and gender signifiers of British culture.

The focus will then be on words, phrases and themes that signify something beyond their grammatical status within the text; an example might be a name of a person, a certain festival, a location or a pattern of dialogue that reflects some regional bias.

6. Materials

The empirical evidence will be collected from three different textbooks all aimed at the "B" level of English. They come from three different but significant publishers. All are written since 2000. Only the actual textbook will be looked at, although all of the resources include multimedia components, workbooks, and teacher materials

To further limit the investigation, five texts from each book will be studied along with the text-specific exercises. This gives a reasonable sample size with which to analyse how the different books treat culture. These texts will all be from writers from Great Britain or Northern Ireland and come from different genres of written text.

6.1 Overview of Short Cuts 2

Short Cuts 2 is an all-in-one textbook published by Bonniers and is designed for the English B level at Upper Secondary School and adult education. The authors are Jörgen Gustafsson and Lennart Peterson. The book is divided into four main sections, *Suspense, Meetings, Classics* and *Big Cities*. There is a debate section on Animal Rights and a music section. The texts in each section are of varying length and genre, with a preponderance of fiction but also including non-fiction texts, poems and song lyrics. Following the main body of texts are what is called the Resource pages, which among other things give information on public speaking, writing CV's and so on. The last section in the book is devoted to grammar exercises.

Following each text are exercises designed to test comprehension. These are designed to test different communicative skills and students' oral, written and listening abilities. The foreword explicitly states that it is communicative ability, used to train students to express experiences, thoughts and feelings that is the overarching goal of the book. No overt mention is made of cultural competence.

6.2 Overview of REALTIME 2

REALTIME 2 is published by Gleerups and again is designed specifically for the B level of English. It is written by Anthony Cutler and Christer Johansson. The authorial introduction is less "promotional" than Short Cuts, and hands the responsibility for the content to the publishers – "our editors have once again insisted that we produce a book full of great stories and really useful language practice."[30]

The emphasis as one would expect from a B course book is on longer passages of authentic literature and non-fiction and include all forms of written text. There are five sections in the book entitled *For Better, For Worse; On the Edge; Time Out, Experience* and *The Moving Edge*. Each text is accompanied by exercises designed to refer back to the text in question and elicit understanding, debate or vocabulary comprehension.

There is no explicit mention made of culture in the foreword or in the blurb.

6.3 Overview of Blueprint B

The final textbook chosen for investigation is *Blueprint B*, written by Christer Lundfall, Ralf Nyström, Nadine Röhlk Cotting and Jeanette Clayton. There are seven thematic chapters in

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[30] Cutler Anthony and Christer Johansson. *REALTIME 2*. Gleerups 2003. p.3

the first half of the book, entitled *Thrill and Suspense; Love is in the Air; Reality Bites; Heaven in a Wild Flower; Credos of Culture; How Far Would You Go* and *24/7*. Each chapter contains extracts from fictional novels and poetry and "form the basis for an orientation in the history of literature from the English-speaking parts of the world, with a number of portraits of writers and some short texts explaining literary trends and styles."[31] Every text is followed by a number of exercises relating to the text designed to test comprehension.

The second part of the book include *Speaker's Corner* and *Writer's Workshop* which guide the student through varied oral and written production. There is also a *Literature Overview*, which traces the progress of English Literature and its historical and social context.

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[31] Lundfall Christer et al. *Blueprint B*. Almkvist & Wiksell. Örebro. 2003. Foreword

7.Results

In this section, the results of the analysis carried out on the texts will be presented, in the order that they appear in the books. First the results of the content analysis of each text itself will be presented, in terms of symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Any geographical, class or gender levels will be highlighted. This will be followed by an explanation of the tasks that belong to that text.

7.1 Short Cuts 2

6.1.1 Rosie Thomas, Footsteps, extract from novel, *Moon Island*

Found in the *Suspense* section, this is a story about an overweight teenage girl May, in possession of a secret diary belonging to a girl called Doone. May is alone in the house and believes herself to be haunted by some force in the building. There is no dialogue in the extract and the symbolism in the piece is purely that of the generic horror or thriller genre. The words and gestures, "liquid terror", "fear locking her limbs", "bubbles of a scream" are universal to the horror genre. No outside reference is made to heroes or figures in the terms outline above and the same applies to the rituals. There are none. Courage, overweight, terror, remembrances of past family life are the main values displayed in the text.

Given the "closed" nature of the extract (no reference to dialogue, time, space etc) it is impossible to divine the national, regional or local significance of the text and apart from that fact that one is told that it is a girl as the main character, issues of gender, class and education are absent.

The tasks that follow the text are concerned with "checking your reading" (reading comprehensions), some vocabulary exercises, an oral task designed around the main themes of the text – that is fear and being scared.

7.1.2 Roger McGough, *Comeclose and Sleepnow*, poem

In terms of symbolism, the poem portrays a man imagining a conversation with a girl who he has spent the night with and whom he knows, will leave to go back to her parents in the morning. No reference is made to heroic figures, either real or imaginary. Obviously the main ritual within the text is that of the early morning dismissal after a night together, and one might infer then that the values of the poem correspond with that ritual. Dismissal, getting home for mother, guilt after sexual adventure could be construed as values here.

The tasks following the poem entail an analysis of the poem and explanations of various poetic and metaphorical phrases. In the writing tasks, students are asked to assume various roles within the poem and write letters explaining their actions.

7.1.3. Alan Warner, Girls Just Want to Have Fun, extract from novel, The Sopranos

This is a story about a choir from a religious school in a small Scottish town, on their way to a singing contest in Edinburgh. The passage is preceded by a pre-reading exercise asking students to think of differences between Swedish and English schools, and how to translate the

name of the school into Swedish (The school is called Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Catholic School for Girls)

As such the main symbols in the text are school uniforms, the nuns being in charge, phrases such as "cheesed off"; "scrunchies" and the names and nicknames of the girls. The hero for the nuns is God (as long as he is the Catholic version!). The rituals displayed in the text are such things as assembly, the school choir and its entry into competitions, the adjusting and correction of school uniforms. In terms of values one can see the religious versus the secular, the sense of acceptable generational rebellion, obedience and representation of organisation.

In terms of cultural levels, one can see from the names of the girls and some of the locations mentioned, differing layers of regional cultural symbolism

7.1.4 Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, extract from novel

There is an historical overview of Jane Austen's life accompanied by an illustration in which the author's life and times are presented. In the extract, the country house, "Michaelmas", the elaborate manners and conventions of the time are examples of symbols, both of the book and of the time. Portrayed as heroes within the text are the wealthy rich bachelor, newly moved into Netherfield Park; the husband who is addressed as Mr Bennet by his own wife. The husband and wife both display the rituals of their time in their over-elaborate politeness and the marrying off of their daughters to someone eligible. The values in the text can be classified as the importance of proper marriage and the differences in love for different daughters.

In terms of cultural levels, one can surmise gender and class issues and regional signposts ("a young man of large fortune from the north of England").

The tasks related to the text include a reading comprehension, language work in adapting the Victorian English to more modern forms, discussions about authorial intent and style, and a writing task about arranged marriages. There is some project work with a choice to write about the book, biographical details of Jane Austen or an important encounter in the student's life

7.1.5. Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, extract from novel

Again there is a short bibliographical note about Wilde and a preview exercise about social classes, which entails a comparison between class in Sweden and England. Symbolism abounds in Oscar Wilde's work including, Tories, Liberal Unionist, country houses, an engagement and suitability interrogation and Duchesses. The heroes in the extract are the "Late Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition", The French Revolution and the Duchess of Bolton. The values in the text again are importance of marrying at the correct level, background, romance between the young lovers and money and property. In terms of cultural levels, there are pointers about geographical location both regional and national, the control exerted by the mother, class issues and generational differences.

There are of course a number of follow-up exercises testing students' ability to understand the text, a synonym exercise and a rewrite to modern English exercise. The discussion/interpretation exercise reflects back on the text, asking for reflections on the title of the

book, Wilde's aim in writing it and identification of where audiences might laugh. The project work is similar in scope and aim to that of Pride and Prejudice's.

7.2 REALTIME 2

7.2.1 Peter Mayle, *Advice to the Young Dog*, short story

There is no introduction or biographical detail to the text or author and the story is written from the point of view of an older dog giving its thoughts on the world around him. The first symbol and ritual that we meet is Christmas, the celebration of that festival and the tradition of giving puppies for Christmas. On the whole the text is a juxtaposition of canine and human behaviour, which reflect a comedic attempt at contrasting standards between animal and human activities.

There are no specific cultural levels represented, with no talk of class, gender or geographical differences.

There are a number of tasks to do after the text, including reading comprehensions, role-plays and vocabulary exercises.

7.2.2 Fay Weldon, *Sharon Loves Darren*, short story

The passage from Fay Weldon has no biographical introduction and no pre-reading exercise. The story is about Sharon who has been admitted to hospital after overdosing on alcohol, in response to her boyfriend, Darren taking another girl, Debbie to the cinema. The primary symbols of the text are the names of the characters, the nurses and their uniforms and the newspaper, The Sun. There is a lack of ritual in the text above the dating and the consequence of betrayed love. The text refers to nothing external in terms of heroes although within the text the nurses are contrasted in terms of behaviour, poise and appearance with the patient. In terms of values, there is distaste at the consequences of binge drinking; the disapproval of Darren who is portrayed as unfeeling and the uncritical love of Sharon for Darren.

When it comes to layers of cultural significance, there are the female nurses and the male doctor (Angus Love); there is no hint as to geographical location but the technical nature of some of the words and techniques in the hospital allude to a modern period.

The tasks that follow the story ask students to comprehend the text, write alternate endings and from alternative points of view. There is a listening comprehension about a pioneering nurse where students have to describe what they hear. The final task is about jokes from the USA and calls for an assessment of what would be funny in Sweden - and what those jokes say about the American system of health-care.

7.2.3 Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers, extract from novel

The text is introduced with a brief overview of the plot of the book as a whole. In the extract the Samuel Pickwick, the founder of the Pickwick Club is celebrating Christmas with his friends and servants. Symbols include mistletoe, mince-pies, games such as blind man's buff, and snap-dragon, the titled Lady Tollimglower. Rituals are the celebration of Christmas in

Victorian England, the kissing under the mistletoe, the coming together to play parlour games, and the usage of Mr to describe the men of standing and first names for the lesser members of the company. The text values togetherness, peacefulness and the collective enjoyment of the rituals themselves.

There are class and gender levels apparent here although it is not possible to divine any regional differences or pinpoint any accents or local indicators.

Exercises on the texts begin with an investigation of Dickens's language followed by some brief biographical details of Dickens. This comes before a listening and translation exercise on Dickens's life and journey to America. The writing assignment is about Christmas in Sweden and a description of another festival which the student has to argue is more important than Christmas.

7.2.4 Sandra Smith, *Tears at Bedtime (And That's Just the Au Pair)*, newspaper article

Sandra Smith's article was originally an article in The Independent newspaper although no mention is made of this in the section (the source is in the text credits). The subject is the conditions that some young women are forced to live under as they come to Great Britain to work as au pairs. The central subject matter is the main symbol of the piece; others include the Home Office, gap years, and private child-care. The use of au pairs is a ritual engaged in according to the text by many families, looking for help with looking after children, as is the emphasis placed on politeness by the German Pastor interviewed by the journalist. In such a text it is hard to find any heroic reference or paragon of virtue. The values expressed in the writing are those of use and abuse of employees, difficulty of integration by both au pairs and their English families.

There is no specific geographical area alluded to, rather a summary of cases around the country. There are class and wealth issues, as well as national differences expressed. There are gender issues in terms of the au pairs, known as "girls", and their relationships with the men in the families.

Exercises for the text include a reading comprehension; a writing exercise that asks for students to explain childcare in Sweden. Speaking exercises include asking the students to talk about their experiences in looking after children and an exercise practising English expressions of criticism and diplomacy. The tasks end with a translation of some phrases based on the subject matter of the text.

7.2.5 Anthony Brown, *London's Air Cleanest since 1585*, newspaper article

Again the source of the article is to be found in the text credits at the back of the book and not in the section in which it is printed. This is a piece of journalism about a study by a professor who has, through statistics, found that London is cleaner now than for 400 years. There are lots of facts about London and its "dirty history" and symbols of this include the nickname, the "big smoke", the influence of Kings and Queens, National Society for Clean Air, names of laws passed to tackle the pollution, "British Disease", "pea-soupers" and The Great London Smog. There are a number of historical figures used to illustrate the polluted history of London; they are used as heroes to pass judgement on the nature of the Pollution. These include Elizabeth I, Samuel Pepys, the diarist John Evelyn and the poet Shelly.

The nature of journalistic reporting means that cultural levels are smoothed out somewhat but the article provides geographical knowledge, historical context and through its selection of heroes, class based indicators.

The tasks that follow on from the text include finishing off sentences as part of a reading comprehension, a speaking exercise about what students can do to reduce the effects of pollution and a writing task about famous environmentalists. The last task is a vocabulary exercise concerning noun building and synonyms.

7.3 Blueprint B

7.3.1 Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, extract from novel

In a small preface, the text is introduced, setting out the context of the extract. Bridget has been made to go to a New Year's Day buffet with her parents, who have been insistent that she appears there so she can be with paired off with a recently divorced lawyer, Mark Darcy. The text abounds with symbols, words such as "yuk"; "darling" (as a form of address); "shag"; "super-dooper top-notch"; Capital radio; "fuddy-duddies" and yellow and blue diamond pattern sweaters, "favoured by the more elderly of the nation's sports presenters." Heroes mentioned include Heathcliff, a character from Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Will Carling, a former captain of the England Rugby team. The rituals in the text revolve around the buffet party, the festive get together. In terms of values inherent in the extract one can see sarcasm, humour attraction and the rejection of plans conjured up by embarrassing parents.

The text proffers up specific geographical locations such as Buckingham and Holland Park, and there are class issues and gender issues. There are also generational symbols in terms of parents setting up offspring with "suitable" dates.

Reading comprehensions again refer back to understanding of the text, while the broader questions of the "reflect and share" section deal with dating, parents embarrassing their children and an exercise to tell the meeting between Mark and Bridget from Bridget's point of view. There are a number of vocabulary exercises on missing words; informal and formal language, and word formation.

7.3.2 William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 18*, poem

The poem is introduced by way of a short explanation of the debate around for whom the sonnets were written and the main themes of the sonnet as literary form. The poem itself is full of symbols (the very nature of a poem), comparing the lover to a summer's day, "darling buds of May"; dimmed golden complexion; the changing temperament of nature and so on. The heroic in the poem include love and nature and the ritual is in the form of the poem itself, being as it is, a formalised expression of the power of time, love and the desire to immortalise those concepts in written form. These serve also as values within the poem, the passing of love and beauty and the desire to capture it for all time, the passing time and attempts to counteract that.

The poem does not refer to any particular geographical location. There are no specific pointers as to class or generational levels.

The tasks are "reading and reaction" – where students are asked to analyse the poem from both a holistic and word level. In the "reflect and share" section, students are asked to comment on the form of the poem; on its value as a love poem; they are asked to rewrite it in modern English and to read it out loud in small groups in order to figure out how it should be read best.

7.3.3 Nick Hornby, *How to be Good*, extract from novel

Nick Hornby's text revolves around a father who, under the influence of GoodNews (a faith healer) has decided to re-evaluate his life and start becoming socially responsible. He does this by giving away his children's stuff to those less fortunate and convincing, and persuading neighbours with spare rooms to take in homeless kids. Hornby uses words such as "kids"; vernacular such as "er, look at er"; "GP" and Ali G. Ali G is also an example of an external hero (to Monkey, the homeless boy) as is Julia Roberts, or rather Julia Robert's character in a film, "Fighting the Good Fight". The values in the text are dealing with the homeless and family and again the importance of courteousness (which is also a ritualised manifestation of culture)

The geographical signifier of culture comes in the line "no other street in London or Britain or the world…" narrowing the location down to a city but no further. There are class pointers, with the bourgeois fear of passive smoking and the disinclination not to offend Monkey.

In the following exercises, students are tested on their understanding of the text, and there are broader questions on the nature of charitable acts and eradication of poverty. Vocabulary work concentrates on word formation, missing words and tasks on informal and formal English.

7.3.4 W.H. Auden, *Funeral Blues*, poem

There are of course lots of poetic imagery in the text from Auden, but the symbols that signify an outside reference include, "crepe bows"; "traffic policemen with black cotton gloves"; "Sunday rest" and "muffled drums". The poem is about a dead friend or lover and that person's qualities are expounded in the poem, leading to a natural conclusion that he is the only hero the narrative voice needed. There are rituals in the bringing out of the coffin, and the mourners participating in the reverence plus the idea of Sunday as a day of rest. Values in the poem concern lost love and friendship and the finality of death.

There are little indicators of geographical specificity or class or gender significance.

The tasks reflect back on the language and understanding of the poem and wider reflections on death. A short biographical insert on Auden is included.

7.3.5 Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, extract from novel

Zadie Smith's text concerns Irie, a half-Jamaican, half-English woman who decides to change the colour and shape of her hair, in order to attract the attentions of an Indian man. She decides to change it to a straight Indian style of hair, to replace the African curls she presently has. Cultural symbols in the text include the use of vernacular like "arse", "puke", "posh" and

"tree" (for three) and even the use of "fake" hair for extending or transforming styles. Going to a hairstylist, "black hairstyling" and the social occasion it becomes, are all evidence of rituals within the community depicted and the different form that takes from the wider white community. Values raised in the piece revolve around cultural allegiance, beauty, improvement and even business ethics.

Within the text given there are no real clues as to where the story takes place - neither city nor region is given although the mention of American magazines implies that it is not set in America. There are definite gender and ethnic flavours to the text and there are class issues at play here too.

The tasks include reading comprehensions and under "reflect and share" students are asked to comment on the language and metaphors in the text. This is followed by a biographical overview of Zadie Smith and some work on words and sentence formation.

8. Analysis

Having looked at the links between culture and language acquisition in section 4, both from a historical and contemporary viewpoint it is necessary to look at the evidence collected from the textbooks. The definitions of culture were portrayed along three axes, and they will form the basis for the analysis of the evidence, looking at the historical or diachronic cultural manifestations as it relates to British culture. Then moving along the synchronic axis, an analysis will be made of culture-as-behaviour, what do the texts show in terms of language, gestures, and attitudes in relation to Great Britain. A third axis is that of the imagination. This is Kramsch's idea of a neutral place of culture meeting, where the text offers up a space for two cultures to meet without values intruding, or blocking or alienating the reader.

8.1 Short Cuts 2

Short Cuts 2 contains a no reference to cultural competence in the introduction or the blurb. It does contain a large section, containing the most amount of texts, called The Classics. This fulfils the course requirements in terms of a broad historical range of the texts to be studied at the B level. Thus it would score highly on our diachronic axis. Of the two texts chosen for analysis, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* are well established as examples of historical literature, suitable as objects of study to both defenders and opponents of any concept of Canon. As representations of capital-C culture the producers of the textbook are on safe ground. The texts themselves contain symbols of historical culture specific to Britain. The image of the country house, the issues of class and correct breeding and background that were so important in Victorian Britain – these are symbols and levels of culture that are decipherable by a native speaker but which may need explaining to non-native speakers. The excessive (to some) rituals of politeness, and a politeness that can be argued to be expressions of class and power would also need some explaining. Heroes within the text are usually titled, coming from wealthy or landed backgrounds – which could form as a basis for further work on the development of English life within the period in question. The texts themselves then provide numerous ways into discussions about the peculiarity of British life in a different historical period.

This makes the failure within the exercises to actively engage in those manifestations more disappointing. The exercises almost always refer to the language content of the texts; they refer back to the self, if you will, of the text. The texts serve a role in deciphering language as code rather than language as a signifier. This is obviously an important, indeed perhaps the main, part of language learning but the failure of the authors to isolate and project any cultural knowledge beyond the fact that they are historical texts in the Classics section, does not fit well with their claims to encompass all the goals in the syllabus. There is an exercise after *Pride…* that encourages students to talk about arranged marriages, but it represents a test in expressing general attitudes to such arrangements, and not to the target country. This is what Pulverness (see section 3) talked of, the reduction of cultural significance to general or universal values, without colour or flavour.

As to the more modern texts, then they would score lowly on any synchronic score chart. Rosie Thomas's extract displays all of the literary devices of a suspense novel but does so in a way that the extract provides no geographical or historical levels of culture, and certainly does not show any manifestations of culture that a reader could say, this is British culture-as-behaviour. Any values in the text are universal - fear, courage or feelings of inadequacy because of being overweight. Roger McGough's poem is a similar story. Without the

hint of the author's name it would be very difficult to assert that this was an Anglo-Saxon writer at work and the universality of the piece, while acceptable in any literary sense, has nothing to offer in terms of specific British cultural significance. Alan Warner's extract is rather better. It is set in Scotland which provides openings for a look at the geographical and political composition of Great Britain (personal experience during VFU has shown that composition of the UK is not always familiar to students even at the B or C level). The language of the girls is replete with vernacular, as is the writing itself, with phrases such as "cheesed off". There is a greater sense of "culture-as-is" in Warner's piece, especially as it highlights school routines, and indeed school forms (nuns running the school). This is reflected as well in the tasks set for students – tasks of analysing the humour in the piece and a discussion of the school routines, encourage students to think of the culture behind the vocabulary and syntax of the writing.

In terms of Kramsch's third axis, then this is area of cultural understanding that Short Cuts 2 fulfils the best. The texts create a neutral space for students to meet with the text, being on the whole centred on universal values and attitudes. There seems to be a definite discursive exclusion to the texts chosen that refuse to allow in anything more than mere details of a foreign culture. Whether the producers of the book are worried about cultural imperialism, or follow a more instrumental approach to communicative competence is difficult to assert, but there is a distinct reluctance to engage in the manifestations or levels of cultural significance that were defined in section 4. The mere presentation of texts that are historical, or part of some canon has cultural value, but that value lies in the investigation of what is different, of what is unique to those texts, not what is universal. Culture as we have seen goes beyond the great artists and writers of the past, and should recognise that those artists work was produced within a small-C culture, within the norms and behaviours of the day, and sometimes in opposition to those norms. This axis of imagination which creates a neutral meeting ground for cultures to interact is strongly represented in Short Cuts 2 but in doing so it has ignored the goal for English-speaking cultural understanding in favour of a intercultural or multicultural emphasis. In doing so, it is left to the teacher to fill in the gaps, to interpret that symbolism which is there but is not made explicit by the textbook.

8.2 REALTIME 2

REALTIME 2 is similar in respect to *Short Cuts 2* in that there is no explicit mention of culture in any form. Unlike that book though, REALTIME does not have a specific Classics section although there is a wide range of genres and historical content within the book. There was only one text chosen that could be considered a Classic, (given that *Pride and Prejudice* features again, and the limitation of authors to British ones) and that was an extract from *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. As is usual with Dickens, there is a great detailed description of the scene, in this case the celebration of Christmas. Symbols waiting to be explained include mince pies, kissing under the mistletoe and the playing of parlour games. These symbols are not engaged with at all, and in that sense it is hard to see the value of the text in cultural terms, except in its historical value. The exercises refer back to the interior of the text, the linguistic devices that Dickens uses. There is no attempt to refer outwardly from the text, except in terms of festival celebration and Christmas. In terms of historical value then the fact of students reading Dickens is valuable. As a chance for the textbook producers to introduce any cultural value beyond that of Classic writing, an opportunity has been lost.

The other four texts chosen are more modern and two of them are journalistic pieces. The text on au pairs by Sandra Smith introduces a different style of writing, non-fiction and the topic is one that displays a level of cultural behaviour alien to most Swedish people, in

terms of day-to-day living. It is that of private childcare, and specifically the employment of young girls to help out with looking after a family's children. Home Office rules (indeed the name of the ministry responsible for internal affairs in a country) and "gap years" are examples of a culture that would need deciphering. The ritual of au pairing is laid bare, as is the culture clash that both au pairs and families experience. This style of writing, which is reflected in Anthony Browns piece on London give good cultural information, specific to one country. They move out of the safe discourse of the other style of texts to present, albeit in journalistic style, facts and interpretations of the country as-it-is; of behaviour that is not sanitised by poetic imagery or universal declarations of love and happiness. London is a dirty city and the notion that culture should just be about what is best in a country does no service to anyone. The consumption of Brown's article provides both diachronic and synchronic knowledge of a specific geographical location and with the target culture. Students, having read that piece, will automatically have created a meeting place between them and native Londoners that goes beyond the mere ordering of dinner or booking a suitable hotel room.

Having read Peter Mayle's piece about being a dog or Fay Weldon's story about binge drinking and unrequited love, it is doubtful whether students would be able to create the same sort of meeting place. Weldon's text does however contain some subtle cultural pointers, which are interesting. The names of the characters involved in the love triangle, Sharon, Darren and Debbie are hugely significant to native speakers because they are loaded with a cultural significance in terms of class, educational levels and if not specific geographical location, then certainly they may be assumed to "come from the wrong part of town". It is these hints, codes and signifiers which are there in the text, but are missed in the exercises about the texts, that is frustrating. It is a miss that reduces the value of the texts as artefacts of culture. These pointers have significance about them that goes beyond the classification of names or places, and can be used to illuminate both the best and worst of the target culture. However the exercise and reflections on the text reduce the texts to examples of linguistic code - a pattern, which by now, should be familiar to the reader.

8.3 Blueprint B

Blueprint B, if one were inclined, would rank as the best of the three books in terms of engaging with English-speaking cultures. It has a complete section tracing the literary history of the English language and complements this with social and historical background information. In terms of the texts themselves it also has a whole section entitled *Credos of Culture*. One of the texts chosen for analysis comes from that section. Zadie Smith is what one could classify as a writer firmly entrenched in modern multicultural Britain. The extract shows a side of Britain in a way that classical texts could not hope to come close to. Portraying characters of colour and differing ethnic backgrounds, the rituals of hairdressing, restyling, and tribal association are recognisable to most British people. Vernacular words such as "puke", "arse" and the Caribbean form of three, written as "tree" are again symbols of a culture alien to many Swedish people. As a text on its own then, there is a value to it terms of cultural significance. The presentation of the text on its own is not enough. It is a failing of the textbook to not go beyond the words and lift out and highlight these symbols and rituals. As a representation of a part of modern day British culture, this is a valuable piece but once again the writers of the exercises miss the opportunity to provide an introduction to such an aspect. Reading comprehensions are designed to do just that, test the ability of the student to understand what was read, but there seems to be a missed occasion to go into depth about the conditions that gave rise to the text itself. The short biography of Zadie Smith does not go far enough.

It is a similar story with the other contemporary texts covered. Within them they contain cultural manifestations peculiar to Great Britain. Helen Fielding describing a middle-class dinner party, with words like "shag", "super-dooper" and external references to heroes like Heathcliff and Will Carling. The discourse of the textbook however does not engage with these symbols however. As an all-in-one solution the textbook does not cover all the goals of the curriculum as mandated in the regulatory documents. Nick Hornby again focuses on an aspect of middle-class life, set in London, concerning the adoption of homeless kids, influence of new-age gurus and reflections on materialism in Britain. Rather than encourage debate about the class system in Britain, the students are asked to reflect on being homeless and how to eradicate poverty. Those are worthy tasks, and none of the exercises in any of the books are superfluous, they all serve a linguistic function. However it is very difficult to find culturally specific exercises that concern Britain-as-it-is.

9. Discussion

The essay began with a number of questions concerning the concept of culture as it relates to second language learning. In section three the historical relationship was outlined and the swing between culture as a critical component of L2 acquisition and culture as a value-laden distortion of language was discussed. In section four however the question of whether culture was an essential component of language learning was cleared up. Linguists, proponents of structuralism, philosophers, anthropologists and literary experts have all come to the conclusion that some form of cultural understanding is necessary to aid in language ability. What that culture may signify is a matter of debate however, and this essay readily acknowledges the sensitive nature of attaching cultural values of the USA or Great Britain to language training in some parts of the world.

However it was established that a goal of the Swedish curriculum specifically calls for knowledge of English-speaking cultures, as well as the promotion of intercultural understanding. This goal serves as the focus for the essay. As such, it can be assumed that firstly, the Curriculum has not wasted words and just thrown in a cultural component without thinking; that it recognises that language both regulates and is regulated by culture. The second assumption would be therefore that textbooks would reflect that importance in their content. That assumption has been tested and found wanting.

It is found wanting in the assumption that the mere presentation of cultural artefacts automatically induces cultural understanding. Signals, symbols, rituals and historical content need to be worked upon, deciphered and explained. If the textbook fails to do so then the didactic implications are clear. It is left to the teacher to point out, elucidate, and expand upon those cultural references when they appear. This in turn has implications for teacher training, especially for a body of language facilitators, unused to the nuances of a certain foreign culture and who themselves are products of a culture using similar teaching materials.

This conclusion does not take into account however the codicil that what was being examined here was a product designed for teachers, not the attitudes of teachers themselves. Even if textbooks are the predominant resource available to teachers, they are not the only resources present. The use of the Internet, the attitude of legislators in Sweden (who do not prescribe certain books or theories of learning), the expertise of the teachers themselves means that deficiencies in textbooks as they relate to cultural understanding can be overcome. It must be pointed out though that teachers may not understand that they are missing out on a huge wealth of information that could enrich their teaching experience, and if the teachers are not aware, then it is more certain that students will not know they are missing out on anything. Darren remains a name not a symbol that could build a whole image to culturally aware language speakers. When a textbook asks students to check their understanding of a text and do not provide a context, be it social, historical or whatever component of culture one chooses, in which to enhance that understanding then something inherent in language acquisition is lost, that is to say true cultural understanding. It puts an added pressure on already busy teachers to help students in providing that background, and additional pressures on teacher-training programmes to incorporate deeper cultural awareness, and not just universal cultural understanding.

Textbooks then, integrate cultural understanding in a very superficial way, given the analysis done here. On one level they do provide a historical overview of sorts – all three books here include texts from varying historical and contemporary eras, and a wide variety of genres are represented. Culture as we have seen can be defined in terms of how a society

chooses to represent itself, in the presentation and reverence for, certain great artists, writers or composers. Capital-C culture is well represented in the resources studied here. However the treatment of those resources remain at the level of linguistic code, and the interrogation of those texts through reading comprehensions rarely refer to manifestations or levels outside of the text. When they do, it is to refer to a generic concept such as love or arranged marriages. Issues of geography, class, educational and gender are rarely taken to refer to cultural phenomena.

In the same way, culture-as-behaviour, small-c-culture is neglected. Symbols are not decoded from their syntactical location in the sentence - a name is left as a name; specific forms of polite address; the use of the vernacular; rituals that may differ or be specific to British culture are left where the lay in the text, becoming just another pronoun or verb to conjugate. In this way, the student gets the message of the text's words and syntax but not its significance. On the synchronic axis in our model, none of the textbooks engage very much with issues of culture. They revert to Pulverness's "trans-cultural appeal" while ignoring the specific-cultural appeal called for in the regulatory documents. The discourse operating here is especially clear when one looks at the heroes (paragons of virtue) or values that the text displays. There are very few that could be not be applied to almost any Western society. There are no texts that talk about the Britain's experiences of War, racism, Empire, attitudes to crime, problems with poverty and conflict. At the same time as there are very topics that relate to the British sense of humour, queuing, tea drinking, fireworks night, classic television programmes, politics, geography and so on. This is by no means a prescriptive list for study nor has this essay tried to define Britishness, except in terms of a place of birth of the authors in question. What it is, is a call for a broad and penetrating look at the target culture in question.

In some sense then, there should be less of the third axis of imagination, a neutral meeting place for intercultural conventions and more of what is it to be British or Scottish or Scottish upper or English lower Class. Where are the images of multicultural Britain, or the representation of regional nationalism that is so strong these days? Where is the help for the student who is perhaps going to live and work in London but who cannot talk of Margaret Thatcher; who makes fun of men wearing flowers in their lapels in November or who actually tries to burn a guy and not an effigy of Fawkes?

It would be unreasonable to expect a textbook to give anywhere near a perfect presentation of a target culture. History is often left to history classes, politics to politics classes and so on. The mutable nature of cultural behaviour presents a problem for the textbook writer and publisher who wishes his or her book to have as long a shelf life as possible, and who realises that the subject of culture is complicated, sensitive and may be value-laden. That however does not really excuse the publishers and writers of textbooks from neglecting attempts to seriously engage with the target culture. They may decide that lists of festivals, recipes for certain foods, explanations about certain behaviours are too simplistic, or that explanations of other behaviours are too complicated but there is a large gap between what the curriculum asks of its students, what the textbook writers say they have produced and the actual contents of the book itself.

To conclude then, perhaps it would be best to look at ways in which further research can be helpful. Of course much bigger samples of texts and textbooks could be researched to give a fuller picture of this issue. It would also be beneficial to do both qualitative and quantitative research on what teachers are doing in schools, questioning them on their attitudes, problems, difficulties and resources used in cultural teaching. It might also benefit the teaching profes-

sion to look at how the school syllabus and university language syllabi can learn form each other or perhaps become somewhat more integrated. Whatever is to be researched, the sample analysed here suggests that culture is very definitely taking a back seat in terms of language competence if one were to rely on textbooks.

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