Norm Critical Pedagogy in the Second Language Classroom

*An case study of three Swedish upper secondary teachers' attitudes and approaches to norms in their English teaching*

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Abstract

English as a second language (ESL) classrooms in Sweden constitute multicultural and social platforms where different language backgrounds and attitudes meet and where norms intersect, are contested and negotiated, creating possibilities for some, but limitations for others. The Swedish National Agency for Education promotes norm critical pedagogy (NCP) as a means to tackle degrading treatment and prevent discrimination in school and in society. NCP posits that restrictive norms, such as heteronormativity, can be challenged in school settings if they are made visible. How teachers approach norms in their classrooms depends on their own awareness of and attitudes to norms. In addition, teachers can feel hesitant to address norm-related issues. Since NCP is a relatively new approach making its way on the Swedish educational arena, promoters of NCP stress the need for more research documenting norm critical teaching practices, especially on how NCP can be approached in specific school subjects, such as ESL. By examining educational steering documents and teacher interviews through discourse analysis and descriptive coding, this qualitative case study yields an insight into the way in which certified ESL teachers might regard and approach norms in the classroom. The results of this study suggest that teachers of ESL can approach norms in a number of ways: by interpreting norm critical pedagogy, solving conflicts and drawing on teachable moments, choosing material, negotiating classroom norms and by learning from reflection. Additionally, this study points to the need for more research such as on successful strategies for implementing NCP in school curricula.

Keywords: degrading treatment, ESL, educational steering documents, norm critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education
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Foreword

This degree thesis is written by Camilla Edvinsson and Sofia Hammarström. We are two pre-service teachers of English for Upper Secondary School in Sweden. Our other subjects are Swedish as a second language and French, respectively. We cooperated throughout the whole research and writing process and wrote all parts as well as did revisions together. We want to thank our supervisor Dr. Ellen Turner for her guidance and insightful comments.
1. Introduction

As societies across the world become increasingly diverse, the interest in, need for and research on critical and inclusive pedagogic approaches keep growing (Brant, 2013; Porto, 2010). Sweden is no exception. English as a second language (ESL\(^1\)) classrooms in Sweden are multicultural social arenas (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4), where norms intersect, are contested and negotiated (Martinsson & Reimers, 2014; Skolverket, 2009), creating possibilities for some, but limitations for others.

Furthermore, according to the subject syllabus for English, the teaching of English should include developing "new perspectives on the surrounding world" and "greater understanding of different ways of living" (Skolverket 2011a, para 1). The Swedish National Curriculum also stresses that students should develop critical thinking (CT) and critical thinking skills (CTS) (Skolverket, 2013, p. 5). The teaching of English in Swedish upper secondary school thus involves more than second language learning. Dominant norms such as being a secular Christian, white and Swedish, heterosexual as well as specific expectations depending on if you are a male or a female, cause discrimination in upper secondary schools across Sweden (Skolverket, 2009). Functional impairment, physical appearance and economic means too represent grounds for degrading treatment in school (Skolverket, 2009, p. 88). In addition, discrimination of immigrants constitutes a societal problem in Sweden (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005), as does intolerance amongst school adolescents toward minority groups (Ring & Morgentau, 2004).

The Swedish National Agency for Education encourages teachers to be norm critical (NC) as well as promotes norm critical pedagogy (NCP) to teachers in Sweden as a tool to combat discrimination and degrading treatment (Skolverket, 2009) and NCP is part of teacher-training curricula in Sweden today (Frisell Ellburg, 2010; Martinsson & Reimers, 2014). The premise of this pedagogic approach is that dominant norms that restrict individuals are illuminated and questioned.

\(^1\) English has been prominent in the linguistic landscape in Sweden for many years, due to its overwhelming presence in media, advertising and the Internet. Swedes are generally good at English (see European Commission, 2012) and some argue that English is present in Swedish every-day life to the degree that it can be regarded as a second language (see Henry, 2016 or Hult, 2012).
in teaching (Bromseth & Darj, 2010). Kalonaityté (2014) states that the term of NCP is distinctively Swedish, and therefore it might not have been used as a direct translation for the same purpose in other languages, however, similar ideas have been expressed under other names (see 2.3). Studies show that addressing norm-related issues in school can be considered a daunting task (see e.g. Lundgren, 2014 or Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Reported best practices could increase teachers' awareness and strengthen their practice. Kumashiro (2000) explains that there should be more concrete examples of how teachers conduct their teaching in relation to NCP as the way individual teachers choose to practice NCP might vary. Bromseth and Darj (2010) therefore highlight that there is a need for more research on successful NCP teaching practices.

Against this background we as pre-service ESL teachers in Sweden are curious to find out how certified teachers of ESL interpret the task of working with norms in their teaching. More specifically, the aim of this study is to explore what Swedish steering documents express about norms and how certified ESL teachers consider and work with norms in their classrooms. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is expressed in the Swedish National Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School and the subject syllabus for English concerning societal norms?

2. Which norms and values do Swedish ESL teachers find important to address in their classrooms and how do they approach norms in their English teaching?

Since the curriculum and subject syllabus for English are the main guidelines for ESL teachers in Sweden, these documents and teacher interviews were examined in relation to NCP. The theoretical framework consists mainly of the anthology Normkritisk pedagogik by Bromseth and Darj (2010), as well as Kevin Kumashiro's Towards a theory of anti-oppressive education (2000), the theories of which NCP is based. With this study, we hope to provide further insights within the field of NCP.
Key concepts are explained in the following section. Chapter 2 provides background to the study, empirical research within the field of critical teaching, teachers' awareness of norms as well as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 describes methods for data collection and analysis, and chapter 4 presents the analysis of the steering documents and the teacher interviews. The concluding chapter discusses implications for the teaching of English as well as suggestions for future research.

1.1 Key terminology

In order to understand the previous research and theoretical background of the present study it is necessary to first define certain key concepts within the field of norm critical pedagogy. The concepts of norms, intersectionality, hegemony and power structures, categorization and Othering, oppression and discrimination are therefore explained in this section.

1.1.1 Norms. Norms are ideas about what is considered normal and, subsequently, what is considered abnormal (Cole, 2012; Martinsson & Reimers, 2014). Norms are present when people interact, and individuals are therefore socialized into the social system of the mainstream society in which they live, which means that they learn to accept the given norms, values and customs of their own society (Cole, 2012, p. 4). The understanding of what is considered normal is therefore a social construct, which means that something that is seen as normal in one context might be perceived as different somewhere else (Kumashiro, 2000; Martinsson & Reimers, 2014) and can change depending on time and place. Norms which are seen as normal are encouraged, while norms which are perceived as abnormal are discouraged, which in turn creates power structures (Janks, 2010, pp. 43-44). For instance, in Sweden today, it is normal and considered natural for both women and men to have children and a professional career, whereas 50 years ago this would be considered abnormal for women, but normal for men (Martinsson & Reimers, 2014, pp. 12-13).

1.1.2 Intersectionality. There is not just one prevailing norm, but multiple, and individuals exist in an intersection between them (Janks, 2010; Tyson 2015). The relationship between gender, ethnicity, sexuality, (dis)ability, social class and nationality intersect, in creating
complex and diverse identities (Knudsen, 2006; Tyson, 2015), and in oppressing individuals (Knudsen, 2006; Tyson, 2015). The concept of intersectionality was developed within feminist theory in order to explain, for instance, how black women experience oppression by patriarchy and racism, or that lesbians experience oppression because of patriarchy and heterosexism (Tyson, 2015, pp. 100-101).

1.1.3 Hegemony and power structures. The dominance of some norms over others creates hegemony, where the dominating norms produce the notion of common sense in a society (Englund, 2005, pp. 140-146). Dominating norms are a part of a societal power structure, which can restrict or limit the freedom of individuals, which is why they are called oppressive or restrictive norms (Janks, 2010, p. 44). One example is discrimination against LGBTQ² individuals in the form of heteronormativity, which refers to the privilege of heterosexuality over homosexuality reflected in society (Tyson, 2015, p. 305). The example illustrates a power structure, which enables categorization.

1.1.4 Categorization and Othering. The prevailing norms create categories which people identify themselves with (Martinsson & Reimers, 2014, p. 11), for instance, man or woman, Swedish or foreign, heterosexual or homosexual. Kumashiro (2000) explains how categories also create stereotyped notions, associations, between for instance femaleness and weakness, limited language proficiency and lack of intelligence, or heterosexuality and normalcy (p. 41), and that stereotypes are harmful preconceptions about other peoples' identities (p. 27). Categorization enables othering of individuals that differ from the accepted norms of society, which in turn creates the dichotomy of we and them (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 25). The term Other, then, is used to describe groups and individuals that are marginalized by the norms of mainstream society, because they are other than the norm (see e.g. Kumashiro, 2000 or Martinsson & Reimers, 2014). One example is the racializing norm of swedishness, which creates the dichotomy of Swedish and immigrant. This can, in turn, lead to oppression.

² Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer individuals.
1.1.5 Oppression. Categories can enable oppression of Others. The pressure to conform to the dominating norms is one form of oppression, which Kumashiro (2000) defines as "a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 25). For instance, because heterosexuality is continuously singled out as the privileged sexuality category, fear of anything that differs from it is made possible (Martinsson & Reimers, 2014, p. 11). The result is that young people are often pressured by their culture to be heterosexual, by their families, media and school (Tyson, 2015, p. 305). Oppression can furthermore lead to discrimination.

1.1.6 Discrimination. According to Swedish law, it is illegal to discriminate against individuals based on seven grounds; sexual orientation, sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, disability and age (SFS 2008:567). All staff in school should actively combat discrimination, harassment and other degrading treatment, and promote equal rights, opportunities and treatment for all students (SFS 2008:567; SFS 2010:800; Skolverket, 2013). Institutions and individuals in a position of power can discriminate against groups and individuals, which means that a teacher can discriminate against a student, but a student cannot discriminate against another student or a teacher (SFS 2008:567).

2. Background

This chapter presents previous research on norms reflected in educational policies, teachers' awareness of norms, and critical pedagogies. In addition, this chapter presents the theoretical framework for the present study: anti-oppressive education and norm critical pedagogy.

2.1 Norms reflected in educational policies

Steering documents inform teachers' practices as well as reflect the prevailing societal norms and the ruling government’s attitudes and values (Kalonaiyté, 2014; Martinsson & Reimers, 2014), which in turn are based on current ruling ideologies and favored educational approaches (Englund, 2005, p. 82). Subsequently, schools are institutions with the mandate to transmit ruling
ideologies of society and reproduce existing social order for the purpose of maintaining hegemony (Chen, 2005; Englund, 2005; Kumashiro, 2000). Kumashiro (2000) and Reimers (2014) state that oppression can be reflected through school curricula. For instance, it can be used to establish tolerance to marginalized groups. Tolerance pedagogy might therefore be encouraged through steering documents, where privileged groups in mainstream society have the power to tolerate Others.

The school is a part of a socialization process, where certain values are enforced while others are discouraged (Cole, 2012; Englund, 2005). Some norms, for example those expressed as the fundamental values of the school, can be considered by many as self-evident and good. Other norms can be considered invisible but are still palpably prevalent, such as norms about nationality, race, economy, gender and class (Martinsson & Reimers, 2014, pp. 9-10). Onatra and Peña (2004) underscore that it is the teacher who is the most important person in the transfer of norms to students, since the teacher interprets the curricula and directly and indirectly influences the students. However, because different teachers might have different opinions about which norms and values are important, the transfer of certain values might differ from teacher to teacher.

2.2 Teachers' awareness of norms

Teachers might have individual attitudes and approaches to working with norms in their teaching, which is also connected to their awareness of norms. Attempting to expand students’ perspectives and trying to combat oppression can, therefore, be a delicate matter. Multiple studies show how unequal power relations are enforced when schools try to battle discrimination by increasing students' tolerance (Skolverket, 2009, p. 98).

Firstly, when addressing issues of marginalized groups in teaching, teachers risk enforcing the dichotomy of we and them. Even if the intent is good, by addressing issues of LGBTQ individuals for example, teachers risk reproducing stereotyped notions (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 32). Instead of illuminating the processes that enable categorization, the result could end up being
establishing *tolerance* toward people, the idea that individuals that comply to the dominating norms, are to *tolerate* individuals that differ from them (Rosén 2010, p. 62).

Secondly, the way that teachers speak about themselves and others can reinforce normative ideas. One example of this is how heterocentrism permeates schools, which is the subtlest kind of prejudice, often unconscious, against LGBTQ individuals (Tyson, 2015, pp. 305-306). Reimers (2014) noted how the heterosexual norm was enforced across the school she studied and how it framed all school activity, for instance because teachers would talk to colleagues and students about their own heterosexual family constellations while assuming that everyone else too would live in heterosexual family constellations or relationships (Reimers, 2014, p. 95). In addition, Forrest (2012) showed that teachers can feel discomfort while teaching about homosexuality, which was shown to be tied to their own attitudes and beliefs. Another reason was lack of support from higher ranked school staff or educational policies. Lack of terms and positive language and discourse resulted in that homosexuality was usually referred to as *it* or *that issue*. Forrest notes that the consequence of heterocentrism is that other sexualities are diminished and made invisible. Also, the general attitude among the teachers in the study was that students should be *tolerant* to homosexual individuals (Forrest, 2012, pp. 127-129), as in accepting their *abnormality*.

Thirdly, teachers might unconsciously discriminate against one marginalized group as they try to establish understanding toward another. This is showcased in Reimers's (2014) study of pre-service teachers' thoughts on addressing LGBTQ issues with students. The pre-service teachers found it important but at the same time difficult. She notes that participants seemed unable to understand that discrimination of LGBTQ individuals is caused by dominant norms. Instead, they blamed individuals. For instance, the study participants discussed how teachers were to address LGBTQ issues in a class where the students' families consider such issues as taboo, mainly, families from other cultures. One risk is thus, as Reimers argues, that "efforts to foster understanding for one marginalized and stigmatized social category, in this case LGBTQ individuals, can lead to
marginalization and stigmatization of another category, namely immigrants" (Reimers, 2014, p. 109, own translation).

Fourthly, mainstream ideas in society can be reflected in classroom dynamics where students are provided different amount of space by teachers, depending on teachers' expectations of them. For instance, it has been shown that teachers provide a different amount of space for girls and boys because they have different expectations on girls and boys respectively (e.g. Julé 2005; Martin, 2012). These expectations, in turn, are often the result of stereotyped notions about masculinity and femininity, such as that boys are lively, adventurous, independent, confident and aggressive, and that girls are obedient, orderly, tidy, neat and chatty (Martin, 2012, p. 35). Studies from Sweden and from other countries also show that students experience degrading treatment in school and limitations because of Othering processes (see e.g. Reimers, 2014) or because of the obscuring of queer individuals' experiences (Forrest, 2012; Skolverket, 2009).

Lastly, the issues mentioned above point to the complexity and situatedness of oppression and how successful teaching strategies that work for any group at any place, are difficult to establish (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 41). Teachers can also feel uncertain and hesitant about addressing issues of marginalized groups or individuals with their students (Lundgren, 2014). Additionally, in a study by Lundgren (2014), teachers expressed that they lacked prior knowledge especially when it came to diverse sexualities. Similar results have been shown in other research as well, such as by Sahlström (2006, as cited in Lundgren, 2014, p. 79). To sum up, it is important that teachers are aware of how norms are played out in school, and which norms are reflected in the teaching. Critical pedagogic approaches have been shown to be successful when working with equal treatment, which is why the next section is devoted to exploring critical pedagogies further.

2.3 Critical pedagogies

English language classrooms are arenas where norms are played out and constantly negotiated, creating inclusion and possibilities for some, and exclusion and limitations for others. To challenge the underlying norms that are the foundation for inclusion or exclusion, and in order
for restrictive norms to be renegotiated, they first have to be made visible (Chen, 2005; Janks, 2010; Kubota, 2010). To be able to work against oppression one must understand the dynamics of oppression and how to articulate it (Kumashiro, 2000). Bromseth and Darj (2010) emphasize that an understanding of what activities produce oppression, is needed in order to create efficient countermeasures to battle oppressive notions (p. 33).

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator Paolo Freire argues that oppression can be combatted through education. He criticizes traditional banking education and calls for the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1972). Since then, educational researchers have theorized pedagogic approaches which aim to combat different forms of oppression by focusing on specific restrictive norms, resulting in approaches such as feminist pedagogy, queer pedagogy and multicultural pedagogy (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 37) or culturally responsive education (e.g. Bennett, Gunn & Morton, 2015 and Porto, 2010) to name a few. A multitude of studies reports on the positive learning outcomes of critical approaches to second language teaching to students' critical consciousness (e.g. Abednia & Izadinia, 2013; Benesch, 1999; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Porto, 2010; Schenke, 1996; Schmenk, 2004 and Simon-Maeda, 2004).

The critical theories on which the above mentioned pedagogic approaches rely, can be used for critical literacy, where one applies critical lenses (e.g. feminist or queer theory) to texts in order to expose hidden meaning such as norms and ideology (e.g. Beach et al., 2011 and Tyson, 2015). Additionally, promoters of critical literary pedagogy stress that teachers should counter Western literary canon which often permeates school curricula, since canonical texts often “perpetuate ideologies that are also dominant - about Whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, Christianity, and physical and mental ability, for example” (Borsheim-Black, Macaluso & Petrone, 2014, p. 123).

The common objective of different critical pedagogies is to empower the powerless and in that way combat oppressive norms in school and in society. Critical pedagogues posit that
this can be achieved when teachers and students develop CT about themselves and the world (Bromseth, 2010; Chen, 2005; Kumashiro, 2000). Dialogue is stressed as one important component in developing CTS (Benesch, 1999; Freire, 1972; Kumashiro, 2000). Björkman (2010) stresses that if students are to develop CTS, they need to feel seen and included and be provided a safe space to speak by the teacher, in order for them to feel comfortable to express themselves (p. 156).

Benesch (1999) argues that CT is developed through dialogue. She examined the learning outcomes of her own teaching of CT in post-secondary school, where she addressed homophobia in her ESL class and engaged her students in dialogue with each other. She observed how her students expanded their initial understanding by putting their thoughts into words and exchanging perspectives with their peers. She points out that: "students are not simply products of their home cultures and passive recipients of the target culture" but "also creators of culture" (Benesch, 1999, p. 576), which means there is opportunity to illuminate different perspectives and to negotiate norms within the classroom, and by extension, in society. She points out that it takes more than just one lesson to wipe out dangerous views, but that understanding might be "the first step toward appreciating human complexity" (Benesch, 1999, p. 579).

The critical pedagogic approach promoted in Sweden today is NCP. It builds mainly on Kevin Kumashiro's theory of anti-oppressive education, which is why his theories are presented in the following section.

2.4 Kumashiro's theory of Anti-Oppressive Education

Kevin Kumashiro (2000) explains that to be able to work against oppression one must understand the dynamics of oppression and how to articulate it. In Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education (2000), he summarizes and critiques research within the field of education aiming at combatting various forms of oppression, and categorizes the research under four major approaches.

The first approach, Education for the Other, centers on improving the conditions for students who are Othered by addressing teachers' and student peers' actions and inaction. This
approach is explained by an assimilationist ideology, which posits that individuals that are Othered should adapt to the dominant norms and become a part of mainstream society (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 27).

The second approach, *Education about the Other*, focuses on how oppression can be reflected through school curricula. One example of this is teaching specific units about the Other by, for instance, focusing on marginalized groups' perspectives or positions in film and literature and throughout history. However, Kumashiro claims that this approach often encourages a distorted and misleading understanding of the Other based on stereotypes and myths (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 32).

The third approach, *Education that is Critical about Privileging and Othering* posits that, to challenge oppression, the focus cannot only be on the Other, there must be a dual process that illuminates not only how the Other is violated, marginalized and oppressed, but also how some groups are privileged, normalized and favored (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 35).

The fourth and last approach presented by Kumashiro, *Education that Changes Students and Society*, explores how oppression is discourse-bound and can change depending on different contexts and situations. In order to counter oppression these discourses have to be challenged by teachers (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 40).

Kumashiro (2000) stresses that teachers should combine aspects of these four approaches as the different approaches are helpful for achieving different goals (p. 25). Kumashiro's work has been used as a foundation to NCP.

### 2.5 Norm Critical Pedagogy

The critical teaching approach promoted in Sweden today, is called *norm critical pedagogy* (Frisell Ellburg, 2010; Martinsson & Reimers, 2014; Skolverket, 2009). The concept of NCP was established in Sweden in 2010, as there was a need to exercise a more power-conscious pedagogy, which combined the main ideas of feminist-, queer- and intersectional theory. Before then, tolerance pedagogy was the dominating approach to working with equal treatment (Bromseth...
& Sörensdotter, 2013, p. 25). NCP is therefore a concept that collects and makes use of different theories with the purpose to create a more inclusive teaching by revealing and questioning norms that enforce hidden power structures in the form of intersecting, oppressive, and restrictive norms (Bromseth & Sörensdotter, 2013; Kalonaityté, 2014).

The Swedish National Agency for Education promotes NC working methods in order to reveal and change unequal power relations that lead to discrimination and other degrading treatment in school and in society (Skolverket, 2009, pp. 98-99). It is a relatively new approach to education, however a few studies show that it can be an effective tool to battle oppression and unequal treatment (see e.g. Bromseth & Darj, 2010). Bromseth and Darj (2010) emphasize that an understanding of what activities produce oppression is needed in order to create efficient counter-measures to battle oppressive notions (p. 33).

**2.5.1 Norms reflected in language.** One way to question the dominant norms is to inspect the language that is used by both teacher and students. Björkman (2010) explains that people can use language to express norms, and that teachers have to be conscious about how the use of some words might reflect oppressive norms, for instance harmful speech such as invectives and name calling (p. 174). NCP instructs teachers to not prohibit the use of certain words, but to initiate a discussion about why these words are used (p. 164). This might lead to a disruption of said power structures, and the students might become aware and gain a new understanding of how their choice of words influences hidden power structures. Kumashiro (2000) also states that teachers' inaction to address oppressive and restrictive norms can be harmful to students that somehow differ from the standard norms (p. 26). What people think is expressed and framed not only by what is said and the actions they take, but also by what people do not say and by their inaction (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 42). If the teacher is aware of how they articulate themselves and if they make conscious language choices, they can create a more equal learning environment (Skolverket, 2015, p. 26). One example can be that teachers can design examples and questions that counter heteronormativity (Björkman, 2010, p. 174). In order to work norm critically, the teacher should problematize and question
expressions that enable categorizing and stereotyping, as well as actively work toward creating space for the students to be themselves, and to give students the freedom to be whoever they want to be (Björkman, 2010; Edemo, 2010).

The focus of NCP is on the teacher's practice, since it is the adults in school who can either enforce or oppose norms that enable unequal power structures (Rosén, 2010, p. 59). Bromseth and Sörensdotter (2013) explain that the teacher is in a position of power, rooted in the norms of privileged white middle-class (p. 24). If teachers are self-aware and conscious about their own privileged position, they can influence the ruling norms, and in extension the exclusion processes of students, by making professional and informed choices about the way they speak about themselves, others and the world (Janks, 2010; Kubota, 2010; Rosén, 2010). Kumashiro (2000) explains that using students’ experiences and previous knowledge as a resource for classroom-based activities will help create a learning environment that fosters awareness of different life situations and world views (p. 34). Students are not a homogeneous group but diverse individuals, which means that awareness of what positions people take up or assign others subconsciously, must be made visible through illuminating ruling norms in the classroom. Awareness of dominating norms in the classroom can create opportunities for students to construct empowered positions from where they might challenge ruling norms (Janks, 2010, p. 57), this would in turn start a process to counter hegemony. Oppression can be countered by altering the discourse by questioning, criticizing and reworking what is perceived as normal and abnormal (Bromseth & Darj, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000).

Both spoken and written language convey norms, and according to Rosén (2010) teachers should therefore always assume a NC approach, as they have to be aware of what norms their own teaching promotes. Teachers should also make conscious choices about what material they use in their teaching, and be aware of which norms that are reflected in textbooks for instance (Bromseth, 2010; Skolverket, 2015). Björkman (2010) explains that one of the most effective ways to work with NCP is to question material, and initiate discussions about the norms that the material reflects (p. 171).
2.5.2 Mistakes and self-reflection. In order to be able to apply NCP, teachers need both theoretical and experience-based knowledge, and Bromseth and Sörensdotter (2013) emphasize the need for reflection (p. 26). There is a need for self-reflection, but also reflection together with colleagues, for example through discussions and reflections on events and experiences. Mistakes are viewed as a resource when working with NCP, as all mistakes are a product of participation in the creation of norms (Bromseth & Sörensdotter, 2013, p. 27). Kumashiro (2002) means that a central part of learning and gaining new knowledge is to make mistakes and to learn from them. Björkman (2010) adds that the only way to become self aware is to meet other people's views and learn from their mistakes, which will lead to a deeper understanding of what is perceived as normal in different situations and contexts (p. 175). However, this also means that NCP is dependent on individual teachers' attitudes toward using NCP in their classroom, as well as different political influences that rule teachers' practices, such as steering documents and other policies on an institutional level (Kalonaityté, 2014, p. 17).

2.5.3 Concerns and critique. There is a great need for more documented research on how NCP is conducted by individual teachers in the classrooms, and because it is a relatively young discipline, it is unknown what consequences it will have in the future (Bromseth & Darj, 2010, p. 15). One of the main concerns is that NCP might reinforce the dichotomy of we and them by conducting education that focuses on the Other, and that it would keep recreating the concept of the Other (Bromseth & Darj, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000). Another critique toward NCP is based on the belief that NCP aims to dissolve and void all norms, as in that there should be no norms, since some argue that all should be allowed to behave according to prevailing norms if they wish to. However, this is a misconception of what NCP aims to do, as NCP focuses on norms that limit individuals' freedom to act, and does not aim to make norms disappear. NCP does not aim at prohibiting actions, but to create critical awareness of harmful structures and ideologies (Björkman, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000).
Previous research shows the complexity involved with approaching and working with norms and how teachers' self-awareness and personal views and attitudes to norms affect their practice and the way in which students are included or excluded from the teaching. Furthermore, there is yet a lack of concrete examples of NCP, not the least in connection to second language teaching. It is this background that motivates the present study and the methods used to explore teachers' attitudes and approaches to norms are described in the following chapter.

3. Methods

The aim of this study is to find out how certified upper secondary teachers of ESL in Sweden view and approach norms in their teaching. Since steering documents inform teachers' practice and indicate specific norms and values that teachers should impart, a qualitative case study was conducted where both steering documents and teacher interviews were investigated in parallel.

The case study design is, according to Backman (2008), often preferred for qualitative research since it aims at explaining, understanding or describing phenomena, organizations or systems, for instance, the ways in which individuals perceive and interpret their reality in relation to their own experiences (Backman, 2008; Nunan, 2012). Trost (2010) explains how in-depth interviews can be used to capture descriptive data about subjective thoughts such as attitudes and perceptions, as well as behaviors and experiences (p. 32). In-depth interviews was therefore chosen as a means to collect the relevant data, as it can be used to attain certified teachers’ subjective interpretations of curricula and their attitudes to norms. Methods for data collection are described in more detail in section 3.1.

Finally, in order to compare and contrast the two sets of data meaningfully and to establish overarching themes, discourse analysis as proposed by Gee (2014a, 2014b) and coding method as proposed by Saldaña (2013) were applied in the same way to both the interview transcripts and the policy documents. Procedures for analysis are described in more depth in section 3.2.
3.1 Data collection

As explained above, two sets of data were analyzed in parallel in order to yield an understanding of attitudes and approaches to norms according to educational steering documents as well as according to teachers. These two sets of data are presented next.

3.1.1 Steering documents. Two documents that upper secondary teachers must look to for guidance in their work are: the Swedish National Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School (Skolverket, 2013) and the subject syllabus for English (Skolverket, 2011a). The curriculum indicates the specific norms and fundamental values of the school (see 2.4), and the subject syllabus specifies the aim of the subject, core content for communication, reception, production and interaction as well as knowledge requirements. These two documents were analyzed in order to answer the first research question: *What is expressed in the Swedish National Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School and the subject syllabus for English, concerning societal norms?*

3.1.2 Teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were conducted with the purpose to answer the second research question: *Which norms and values do Swedish ESL teachers find important to address in their classrooms and how do they approach norms in their English teaching?*

A small number of participants was opted for in order to conduct in-depth interviews. For strategically choosing participants for the study, *criterion based selection* was chosen, which means that one chooses participants that meet specific criteria (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015, p. 54, 56). The teachers who were asked to participate, where chosen based on the following criteria: they were certified teachers of ESL, currently teaching ESL at Upper Secondary School in the south of Sweden, and they were interested in norms connected to second language teaching. A total of eleven teachers in different schools in the south of Sweden were asked to participate and six of them reported interest. However, due to different circumstances, three teachers withdrew their participation, while the other three completed the interview. The teachers who agreed to participate received a missive (see Appendix 1) containing general information about the study. They were
informed that their participation would be anonymous and that they could abort the interview at any moment should they wish to. The research ethical considerations taken were inspired by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

In order to keep the participants’ identities anonymous, they are referred to by the pseudonyms Kim, Charlie and Max. Kim, has taught English for 17 years and has a teaching degree from 2003. She currently teaches six groups of English, which include courses 5-7, that is, all three levels of upper secondary English in Sweden. Kim teaches students from a variety of programs, both theoretical and vocational. The group sizes range from 17 to 32 students. The second participant, Charlie, has taught English for 17 years as well, and has a teaching degree from 2000. She currently teaches two groups of the course English 6, both consisting of 32 students from theoretical programs. Lastly, Max has taught English for 10 years and has a teaching degree from 2006. She currently teaches students from theoretical programs, one group of 17 students in English 5, and one group of 28 students in English 7.

In the interview, the questions were semi-structured. The advantage of this approach is that participants usually feel at ease to share their values, world-view and experiences, as long as the questions are not sensitive in nature or perceived as disturbing. Semi-structured interview questions are open ended, with occasional short follow-up questions that give participants freedom to express their views, values and experiences in their own terms. The questions that are asked should be short and specific, but not leading (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015; Trost, 2010). *Why-questions* were avoided, since such questions can cause participants to feel questioned and turn hesitant to expressing their thoughts freely (Trost, 2010, pp. 102-103).

An interview manuscript was used as guidance (see Appendix 2), which was outlined with backdrop to previous research on the subject, the theoretical framework of the present study, as

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3 In the Swedish Upper Secondary School, students attend a specific program that they have chosen themselves. There are theoretical programs that prepare students for university studies, the Economy program for instance, and there are vocational programs, which prepare students for work within a specific vocation, such as the Stylist program.
well as interview practices presented by Christoffersen and Johannessen (2015), Nunan (2012) and Trost (2010). Trost (2010) advices that the guidance should cover key issues as a whole, but include few questions (p. 71). The questions, therefore, consisted of nine predetermined open-ended questions, and the participants were occasionally asked short follow-up questions to elaborate on what they had previously stated. The first series of questions consisted of short questions with the purpose of gathering basic information about the participant. The second and main part of the interview consisted of open-ended, and non-leading questions, such as general questions about the subject, and their own experiences and attitudes to working with norms. The last part focused on gathering more specific details to allow for a deeper reflection on the subject, as suggested by Trost (2010, p. 78). A pilot interview was conducted beforehand with a certified ESL teacher, to make sure the questions were clear and not sensitive or risking being perceived as disturbing.

The interviews were conducted within a two-week period during the spring of 2017, were between 30-55 minutes long, and took place in each participant’s workplace. Since Swedish is the first language of all participants, all interviews were conducted in Swedish so as to avoid misunderstandings of abstract terminology and allow the participants to express themselves as freely as possible. To be able to analyze the data as reliably as possible, the interviews were recorded using a smart phone. The section that follows describes treatment of the data.

3.2 Methods for analysis

In this section, methods applied to analyze the data are described. First, in order to facilitate analysis, the interviews were transcribed. No other transcription convention than standard punctuation was used, for the purpose of readability. As the aim of the study is to explore teachers' attitudes, a broad transcript was used, which is a transcript that does not focus on different cues, such as small pauses, slight hesitations, or changes in sounds, loudness or pitch (Gee, 2014b, p. 2). Instead, the focus is on the teachers’ ideas, thoughts, experiences and issues, and relevant excerpts were selected to illustrate salient data. The excerpts were translated by the researchers, who tried to reflect the participants' words as closely as possible.
Secondly, the steering documents and the interview transcripts were analyzed using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis can be used to show how language can carry different meanings, not only through the use of grammar, but also through utterances across sentences in specific contexts in both speaking, hearing, writing and reading (Gee, 2014a, p. 2014). There are two ways to perform a discourse analysis; one is with a focus on grammar and linguistics, while the second approach focuses on how language is connected to ideas and themes. Gee (2014a) explains that utterances are based on something he calls a *web of association*, where people associate ideas and themes with the language that is used in certain contexts (p. 26). An utterance communicates different functions depending on in what context it is expressed. Discourse analysis as a method is therefore interpretative, as the associations are influenced by the reader's previous experiences and knowledge (Gee, 2014, p. 26). The second approach to discourse analysis was used for the present study, since the aim is to illuminate ideas and themes, and how these are expressed in the data.

What is more, Gee presents 28 tools for conducting discourse analysis in his book *How to do discourse analysis - a toolkit* (2014b) and explains that "a tool for discourse analysis is a specific question to ask of data" (Gee, 2014b, p. 2), which means that you keep this question in mind as you read the text. Out of the 28 tools presented by Gee (2014b), the following tools were chosen to find out what steering documents and teachers suggest about working with norms (i.e. attitudes, intentions, motives, activities etc.) and adapted to fit the study:

- What activities is the teacher and text presenting?
  
  *(Tool #15: The activities building tool (pp. 102-103))*

- What purpose do the teacher and text try to accomplish?
  
  *(Tool #7: The doing and not just saying tool (p. 50))*

- How is the teacher or text trying to influence how people think and act?
  
  *(Tool #13: The Context is Reflexive Tool (p. 90))*
• In what way is the teacher and text interpretive by the reader?
  (Tool #2: The Fill In Tool (p. 19))

• What policies do the teacher and text enforce or diminish?
  (Tool #18: The Politics building tool (p. 124))

• What identities are the teacher and text enacting or dismissing?
  (Tool #16: The Identities Building Tool (p. 112))

Initially, these six tools inspired by Gee (2014b) were applied to interrogate the data. Next, descriptive coding method as presented by Saldaña (2013) was applied to the data in order to organize the data in a systematic way and to establish any similarities between the three interviews, as well as between the teachers' responses and the steering documents. Coding is a systematic and interpretative method where portions of language-based data are extracted and assigned meaning, *codes*, in order to establish patterns in the corpus (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4, 8). A code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute” to a passage of data (Saldaña, 2013, p. 3). More specifically, descriptive coding is used to summarize the topic of a piece of data, in other words, the substance of the message (Saldaña, 2013, p. 88).

Saldaña (2013) suggests that one starts interpreting the data with a few codes in mind, which are in line with the research’s conceptual framework (deductive coding), but then data driven (inductive) coding can emerge as well (p. 65). Therefore, the coding was informed by theories and concepts related to anti-oppressive education and NCP, as presented in sections 2.4 and 2.5, which means that activities in connection to, or thoughts about norms for instance, were coded. The interview transcripts were printed out with large margins to facilitate the coding process and by allowing for underlining, colour coding and note taking (Saldaña, 2013, p. 17, 19, 26). Episodes from the data were identified by one or more of the discourse tools used and then assigned codes. As is shown in the example below, an excerpt can be assigned multiple codes:
Interview excerpt: tools:

well, [it would in that case be content-wise, that you pick texts] where you feel like, this is good, [this could probably broaden their thoughts] about, well, about differences and that [you should accept differences in people] (Max)

Codes that have something in common were then categorized into themes (Saldaña, 2013, p. 6, 9, 14). From the discourse analysis and coding, the following themes emerged:

1. Interpreting norm critical pedagogy
2. Resolving conflicts and drawing on teachable moments
3. Choosing material
4. Negotiating classroom norms
5. Learning from reflection

These five themes also form the structure of the following chapter, which presents the results from analyzing the steering documents and the teacher interviews.
4. Attitudes and approaches to norms in the ESL classroom

In this chapter, the results from analyzing the teacher interviews as well as the steering documents are presented. The steering documents and the teachers suggest different approaches to working with norms and equal treatment. The following themes emerged from the textual analysis: *Interpreting Norm Critical Pedagogy, Resolving conflicts and drawing on teachable moments, Choosing material, Negotiating classroom norms* and *Learning from reflection*. These themes are presented in sections 4.1-4.5, each section starting with an analysis of how the theme is reflected in the steering documents, followed by an analysis of how the theme is expressed by the study participants.

4.1 Interpreting Norm Critical Pedagogy

Nothing is explicitly written about NCP in the steering documents, however it can be conveyed through the norms and values which the school promotes. When inspecting the educational policies, one can discern the selected norms and values that should be imparted to students. However, it is equally interesting to look at both what is written in the steering documents, as well as to question what is not written. Some of the values expressed are the following:

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people are the values that the education should represent and impart. In accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is to be achieved by nurturing in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility.

Teaching should be non-denominational. (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4)

Firstly, "the inviolability of human life", can be interpreted as that all humans are individuals with the right to exist, without encountering oppression or discrimination (see 1.1.1, 1.1.5, & 1.1.6).

Secondly, "individual freedom and integrity", might imply that everyone has the right to be
whoever they want to be, and that individuals are free to create their own empowered identities (see, 1.1.2 & 2.5.1). Third, "the equal value of all people" as in everyone should be treated the same and be given the same possibilities (see 1.1.3, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 2.5.1). Fourth, "equality between women and men", is part of the Discrimination Act, which promotes equal rights regardless of gender (see 1.1.6 & 2.2). Lastly, "solidarity between people", might promote equality, justice and understanding (see 1.1.2). These five fundamental values that should be represented and imparted in education according to the curriculum, all relate to equal treatment.

However, there are also other sentences that might carry value, for instance, "Christian ethics" and "Western humanism", and "by nurturing in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility". The transfer of these values might be interpreted as if teachers should impart generosity and tolerance in students, from a Christian and Western perspective. Which might, on the one hand, teach students to tolerate and accept Others that do not comply to Christian and Western values. On the other hand, it might suggest that Others should adapt to Christian and Western values. The value "tolerance" must therefore be problematized, as in who decides what is considered different. As discussed in section 2.2, tolerance pedagogy is problematic in the sense that it implies that individuals that belong to the dominating norms are to tolerate and accept individuals that differ from them. Thus, unequal power relations might be enforced when school tries to battle discrimination by increasing students' tolerance to Others (see 2.2).

Teachers should acquire NC awareness, so they can problematize tensions found in educational policies, in order to work with equal treatment. However, because NCP is not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum, there is a need to investigate how teachers interpret the charge of working with norms in their teaching. Since The National Agency for Education recommends the use of NCP to combat discrimination and degrading treatment in school and in society (see 2.5), the teachers were asked how they interpret NCP. Max, Kim and Charlie gave different answers, as can be seen below:
What I think of then is that you shouldn’t see it as if all should be cast in the same mold. But that you should, well, adapt to the students, in other words, adapt to the individuals [...] that you have different tasks [...] not everyone needs to work in the same way, not everyone needs to turn out the same [...] if a student has a difficulty, you have to adapt. (Max)

Max interprets NCP as customizing the teaching according to students' different needs and that students might not all have to work with the same assignments, in the same pace or that there might be other changes that can be made which would benefit students who are having difficulties of any kind in the ESL classroom. The first step to actively challenge unequal power structures and work with equal treatment is to be aware of the fact that the students are not a homogeneous group, but diverse individuals with intersecting identities (see 2.5.1 & 1.1.2). According to Bromseth and Sörensdotter (2013) and Rosén (2010), teachers can assume a NC awareness where they can inspect what their own teaching promotes and which students it will benefit or limit (see 2.5.1). Max's statement shows awareness of the students' differences, and that they might both have different possibilities and limitations in the ESL classroom.

When asked the same question, Kim also questions the school system and how the system might work in some students' favor or disfavor, as can be read in the excerpt below:

Yes, questioning the prevailing norms, a lot. It can be what is closest to the students, to the school system. How it works and the curriculum and the knowledge requirements not the least [...] if one thinks of school and which norms the school should uphold, then it is also perhaps, what is the purpose of school and what does the school system look like and who does it benefit the best and the most and like, how are you to get through it in the best way. It should be possible to discuss, twist and turn, and see if there might exist alternative ways that are as good. (Kim)
Kim interprets NCP as being critical both toward norms that surround the students, and to the school system and the educational policies, such as the national curriculum and the course requirements. For instance, which norms are to be reinforced by the school as an institution (see 2.1). Some students will be strengthened by the norms that are enforced, while others might be oppressed if they do not comply with the norms, or be affected by exclusive classroom dynamics (see 1.1.4, 2.2 & 2.3). Kim also asks "who does it benefit the best", which shows an awareness of the fact that some students will not be able to benefit from the teaching within the frame of these norms. However, Kim might think of the desired learning outcomes as expressed in the course syllabus, as she says "how are you to get through it in the best way", which might imply navigating through the school system and getting a passing grade, as well as being prepared for life after school. According to Kim, NCP means that teachers must be aware of the fact that the students are a heterogeneous group with diverse identities, and that some students might benefit from the system while others might struggle. Teachers should therefore be able to discuss the steering documents, as Kim explains "it should be possible to discuss, twist and turn, and see if there might exist alternative ways that are as good". Kim shows NC awareness, and voices that teachers might both work with, question and rework existing educational policies, and adapt their teaching to the needs of the students.

Charlie, when asked about what NCP means, is thinking of the norms of society, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

It is of course that one shouldn't accept the, simply, accept the prevailing norms in society, but that one should discuss and relate to them. (Charlie)

Charlie shows NC awareness when stating: "one should discuss and relate to them". Both Bromseth and Darj (2010) and Kumashiro (2000) explain that oppression in school and in society can be countered by altering the discourse, which is done by questioning, criticizing and reworking what is
perceived as normal (see 2.5.1). This can be achieved if teachers and students develop CTS about themselves and the world (see 2.3). Furthermore, students are socialized into the system of mainstream society, for example through school (see 1.1.1, 2.1). Charlie is connecting NCP to, not only the school context, but also the prevailing norms of society.

To summarize, when the teachers were asked what NCP means to them they all answered that norms have to be questioned. However, they expressed slight differences about how and which norms should be questioned. Max talked about how students might learn in different ways and that the teacher has to adapt the teaching, while Kim was questioning educational policies and reflected on which students might have an advantage or disadvantage in school. Furthermore, Charlie extends NCP to the prevailing norms of society as a whole. Subsequently, both Charlie and Kim expresses that the prevailing norms of both society and in the school context should be discussed. Kumashiro (2000) explains that what people think is framed by what people say or do not say, as well as what actions they take or by their inaction. There is therefore a need to investigate the teachers' practical work with equal treatment in the classroom, which is presented in the following sections.

4.2. Resolving conflicts and drawing on teachable moments

As discussed in the previous section, teachers are, according to the national curriculum, supposed to transfer certain fundamental values to students. However, as will be illustrated in this section, the parallel analysis of school policies and teachers' responses reveal a tension between on the one hand, representing the fundamental values of the school and on the other hand, being objective as a teacher and encourage different ways of thinking:

The school should be open to different ideas and encourage their expression. It should emphasise the importance of forming personal views and provide opportunities for doing this. Teaching should be objective and encompass a range of different approaches. (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4, emphasis added)
The curriculum states that the school, and subsequently teachers, should "be open to different ideas" and encourage students' to express their ideas. In the same paragraph, it is stated that: "teaching should be objective". In other words, teachers should be non-partisan, unbiased in their interaction with students as to offer a safe space for them to express their ideas (cf. "provide opportunities for doing this"). In the following excerpt however, it is stressed that teachers should renounce anything that goes against the fundamental values of the curriculum:

All who work in the school should always uphold the fundamental values that are set out in the Education Act and in this curriculum, and clearly dissociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values. (Skolverket, 2013, p. 5, emphasis added)

"Clearly dissociate" can be interpreted as if teachers should make their position to expressions that conflict with the fundamental values of the school, clear, to their students. Critical theorists argue that degrading comments for instance must not be ignored, since what people think is expressed and framed not only by what is said and the actions they take, but also by what people do not say and by their inaction (see 2.5.1).

Looking at the two excerpts above together, they can be considered quite ambiguous. Should teachers allow all kinds of expressions in their classrooms, or are they to clearly signal what expressions are allowed and which are not? Against this tension, the participants of the study were asked how they deal with students who express opinions that conflict with values that teachers are to uphold. One tendency that was identified was that the teachers considered working with norms and equal treatment as solving direct conflicts or handling isolated instances that arise. The teachers suggested different strategies for handling such situations.

One way of addressing unacceptable behavior is suggested by Charlie in the following excerpt:
When a student has said something degrading to another [...] in those instances you have had to simply intervene and signal [...] it has been more like, sort of jokingly and when you have talked to the student it hasn't been that seriously meant. And it hasn't been grounded in any racism or a sexual harassment or anything like that.

(Charlie)

Charlie shows NC awareness by not letting degrading comments go unnoticed and that it is part of the teacher charge to signal to students when they are acting inappropriately (see 2.5). Nonetheless, she then says "it has been more like, sort of jokingly" and that "it hasn't been grounded in any racism or a sexual harassment or anything like that", and she might be unaware of the fact that students' use of foul language can enforce hidden power structures and stereotyped assumptions. As Björkman (2010) explains, invectives oftentimes reflect restrictive and oppressive norms. A NC approach to handle xenophobic and other foul language, could be to initiate a discussion about why these words are used, rather than ignoring it or simply reprimanding students, since it could lead to students becoming aware of how their choice of words influences hidden power structures and that why what they are saying could be degrading to others (see 2.5.1).

The asking-why-approach as proposed by Björkman (2010), is reflected in the approach suggested by Max who, in the episode below, remembers a discussion she had with a colleague, about how one should react if students express xenophobic views:

There was some colleague that said that, no, I tell them that during my lessons they are not allowed to talk about such things. And then I felt like, that isn't good either. Isn't it, isn't it better if they get to express these things and then I can ask thought-provoking questions, like, is it really like that? To get them to change their mind in that way, or to get them to open up to different ways of thinking [...] I can't do any
wonders [...] all you can do is to try to ask questions, like, why do you think that you're thinking that way. (Max)

Max's reasoning here points to an interesting fact, that if students are not allowed to express their opinions, these will not surface and in extension cannot be challenged. Something which is underscored by Benesch (1999), who stresses that students can expand their understanding when they put their thoughts into words and exchange ideas and experiences (see 2.3).

Kim seems to have similar thoughts on how to handle students that express opinions that conflict with the fundamental values of the school, based on what she says in the excerpt below:

Yes, that is quite common. It's quite common but often, I'm thinking, that perhaps you hear, you test and try to express these things in many different places and the school is just one such place. And perhaps you expect a certain resistance, or at least good arguments. (Kim)

As Kim notes above, perhaps students are simply trying out new language. What Kim is pointing to, is that students want to express themselves in school. She might imply that students may be aware that what they are saying is wrong or against the school's policy, but they do it anyway. Nonetheless, they might not know why it is wrong. It is then the teacher's task to challenge them and teach them why certain language can be problematic as it might enforce stereotyping and Othering (see 1.1.4 & 2.5.1).

To summarize, the curriculum can be considered ambiguous in regards to how teachers should position themselves to different ideas as it says teachers should both encourage ideas and renounce those that conflict with the fundamental values of the school. Nonetheless, the NC perspective seems to provide a way to bridge this tension, as it posits that teachers draw on
conflicts that occur, such as invectives being uttered between students in the classroom, in order to illuminate restrictive and oppressive norms together with students, since such norms are expressed and upheld through language. As the teachers' answers indicate, such instances provide teachable moments, which is in line with the *asking-why-approach* suggested by Björkman (2010) (see 2.5.1). If teachers address insults and try to help students to reflect on their own way of thinking, students could develop CTS, which is, ultimately, the goal of all critical pedagogies and the key to social change (see 2.3). Another strategy for developing CTS in the ESL classroom is to draw on texts and other material to encourage student discussions about the world. This strategy is reflected in the steering documents as well as in the teacher interviews, as seen in the following section.

### 4.3 Choosing material

The subject syllabus for English specifies that the content of communication for the course English 6 should include "concrete and abstract subject areas related to students' education and societal and working life; current issues; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings; ethical and existential issues" (Skolverket, 2011a, para 4), and that students should develop "the ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (Skolverket, 2011a, para 4).

Different kinds of texts can be used for the purpose of introducing students to concrete and abstract subject areas, where they can be given the possibility to express thoughts, opinions, and ideas, as well as share their experiences and feelings, and discuss ethical and existential issues. This is in line with Björkman (2010), who explains that one of the most effective ways to work with NCP is to initiate discussions about the norms that the material reflects (see 2.3 & 2.5.1). When the teachers were asked about how they work with equal treatment in the classroom, all of them stated that they use different texts, and they gave examples such as English textbooks or novels. Max for instance, says: "it would be content-wise, that you pick texts where you feel like, this is good, this could probably broaden their thoughts". In a similar way, Charlie explains, in the excerpt below, how equal treatment comes in naturally in the education through the choice of material:
It is something that is very much infused in the material that, if you're working with a
textbook in English for example, you find it in texts and so on, diversity is addressed
and things like that. So it comes in naturally. But it isn't something that I'm thinking I
am supposed to work with actively. (Charlie)

Charlie's statement might imply that the teachers rely on the content of English textbooks to address
topics about equal treatment and diversity. However there is a risk in relying on textbooks without
actively criticizing them. As Kumashiro (2000) stresses, teachers need to be aware of which norms
are being reflected by the material, as well as what is omitted (see 2.5.1).

Kim also uses textbooks, however the focus is put on the discussions and how the text
can be used to introduce new perspectives, as Kim explains: "but then in the texts there are, too,
some things that you can discuss when it comes to norms, or how you can perceive the world in
different ways". In the excerpt below, she is reflecting upon how texts by diverse authors could help
to combat prejudice:

Yes [equal treatment] is also something that comes in nicely in the material. I have of
course read beforehand and chosen parts that I think will work. And to my delight,
[...] there are now texts by, for example, African writers and so on. And I think that is
important to include, in order to appease this, which we all have, prejudicial, we all
have lots of prejudices. (Kim)

Kim does not explicitly explain how texts by African authors can combat prejudice. Kumashiro
(2000) underscores that there is a need to present different perspectives, experiences and
worldviews as it can create awareness of different life situations. Kumashiro's Education that
Changes Students and Society describes oppression as discourse-bound, which means that
oppression takes different shapes depending on different contexts and situations (see 2.5.1). Kim expresses above that she has experienced a development in regards to who's experiences and who's voices are being represented in school textbooks, which shows she is aware of how textbooks might implicitly transfer certain norms. Promoters of critical literary pedagogy explain that White Western literary canon often permeates school curricula (see 2.3), and that introducing students to authors from different parts of the world can challenge such canon by representing diverse perspectives. This type of reasoning is in line with critical pedagogic approaches which aim to develop critical consciousness such as critical literacy (see 2.3), developing CTS through dialogue (see section 2.3) and the syllabus for the course English 6 which states that students should develop "strategies to search for relevant information in larger amounts of text or longer sequences of spoken language and to understand perspectives and implied meaning" (Skolverket, 2011a, para 4, emphasis added).

To summarize, the teachers all use different texts to introduce students to how the world can be perceived in different ways, which in turn can lead to students developing CTS (see 2.3). The teachers are aware of the fact that norms are conveyed in the English textbooks, however they might make more conscious choices about the material they are using when they select it themselves, instead of relying on textbooks. In addition to whether they work with equal treatment, the teachers were asked which norms and values they think are important in their English classrooms and teaching. Their answers are presented in the next section.

4.4 Negotiating classroom norms

The next major theme that was identified in the data is the negotiation of classroom norms that occurs on different levels and which is dependent on many aspects. As explained in section 4.1, the steering documents indicate certain values that teachers are to pass on to students. However, as is shown in this section, teachers interpret slightly differently, how this should be put to practice.

Kumashiro (2000) and Englund (2005) claim that the school is reproducing norms, as schools are institutions with the mandate to transmit ruling ideologies and reproduce existing social
order and hegemony through, for example, educational steering documents (see 2.1) and this is illustrated by the following excerpt from the Swedish National curriculum:

The school has the task of passing on values to students, imparting knowledge and preparing them to work and participate actively in society. (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4)

However, because different teachers might have different opinions about what values are important, the transfer of certain norms and values might change from teacher to teacher. This is demonstrated by Max, Kim and Charlie, who all have their own views on what norms and values they think are important in their English classrooms and teaching.

Max mentions the importance to see and acknowledge all students, and to divide the speaking time between students. As discussed in section 2.2, exclusive classroom dynamics can lead to unfair distribution of speaking time. It could be argued that Max shows NC awareness in preventing potential injustice by creating equal speaking opportunities for the students. In addition, Max also mentions the value of being responsible for one's own actions, being on time for class, or to turn in assignments on time. This is also illustrated in the curriculum, which states that students should "take personal responsibility for their studies and their working environment" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 11).

Kim answered that it is important to think about how to address each other, listen to one another and not interrupt when someone else is speaking, as well as learn to cooperate with everybody, for example through group projects, as well as to be responsible for one's own work. This is also in line with the curriculum, which states "students should develop their ability to take initiatives and responsibility, and to work both independently and together with others" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 6).
In contrast, Charlie does not mention any specific values that are important to transfer to students, but she explains that dialogue and mutual respect are the most important components when transferring values and that it is important to be a role model for the students:

We have a dialogue based on mutual respect. So, to create this relationship with the students, I think that is really important. And once I have managed to create this relationship, then I can go ahead and influence [...] norms and such, and to transfer what I think is important. That they see me as a role model and that I, in both words and actions, try to show them how to act as an adult in our society. (Charlie)

Even though the intention of the teacher is good, there is a risk in trying to be a role model for students. The teacher is in a position of power rooted in the norms of privileged, White middle-class, and The National Agency for Education explains that being a secular Christian, white and Swedish, is considered the norm, which in turn might cause discrimination in school (see 2.5 & 2.5.1). However, as long as the teacher is aware of their own privileged position, and makes informed choices of what is said and the actions that are taken, the teacher can use the position of power to challenge hidden power structures (see 2.5.1). NCP can then be used to create awareness of dominating norms in the classroom. For instance, the teacher can actively work toward creating a space for the students where they have the freedom to be whoever they want to be (see 2.5.1). Thus, NCP might be used as a strategy to show the students how to act as an adult in society, which is in line with the values found in the curriculum: "the task of the school is to encourage all students to discover their own uniqueness as individuals" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4).

Max, Kim and Charlie all mention different norms and values that they think are important in the ESL classroom. In extension, their beliefs influence how they act and speak, which might either directly or indirectly create inclusion or exclusion among students (see 2.5.1). All three teachers are, however, negotiating norms together with their students, as they either challenge or
reproduce norms (see 2.4). However, Charlie explains: "one can never underestimate the relationship to the students [...] because if you don't have the trust, then they won't want to learn anything from you either", which can be interpreted as that the teacher-student relationship must be good in order to have a dialogue where norms can be negotiated. Charlie and Max give two different examples of how norms can be negotiated and recreated in the classroom. In the excerpt below, Charlie discusses how one might counter restrictive heteronormativity, which often permeates schools (see 2.3):

You try to challenge some traditions and conventions and like, how I express myself. I think of including like, it doesn't always have to be a heterosexual couple for instance, in an example, but you can take a homosexual couple too, that you try to integrate it, so that it becomes natural [...] that way of thinking is always there. And that you react instinctively, if something would come up in a discussion, that you, but that isn't anything strange, is it? It could be that way, that's totally fine. That I signal both with words and with body language and everything, that it is okay to be different, it isn't strange. (Charlie)

On the one hand, Charlie suggests how one can challenge some traditions and conventions, such as heteronormativity, by using non-normative examples in the classroom discourse in a natural way, which could lead to a more inclusive classroom atmosphere. On the other hand, homosexuality is also articulated in connection to "it is okay to be different, it isn't strange". The dichotomy of we and them might be reinforced when the teacher speaks of marginalized identities as different (see 1.1.5 & 2.2). Even if the intent is good, the result might be that a tolerance perspective is taught to students, instead of underscoring that all identities are equal (see 2.2). In addition, the national curriculum states: "the school should promote understanding of other people and the ability to empathise" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 4). But in doing so, the policy documents might encourage
tolerance pedagogy, where the focus is placed on differences in relation to groups that are seen as Others (see 2.1). Kumashiro's *Education about the Other* explains that policy documents might oppress marginalized groups when they aim to teach students about who the Others are (see 2.4). It is also difficult to fairly represent all marginalized groups, as there are many ways that norms can intersect to create complex identities (see 1.1.3 & 2.5).

In a slightly different way, Max gives an example of how norms can be negotiated together with the students. In the following excerpt, she explains how the students had expressed homophobic ideas, and Max asked them to reflect on why homosexuality provokes them:

I say, well I am heterosexual, I feel like I am born a woman, I feel like a woman and I am attracted to men. And that makes things really easy for me but, why should I, there's no problem to me that others might feel that way, and it doesn't provoke me [...]. Why do you find it provoking? (Max)

This is a good example of NCP, as Max shows awareness of her privileged position when using herself as an example in a discussion about sexual diversity (see 2.5.1). Max explains that she is heterosexual and attracted to men, and also identifies herself as a woman, all within the dominating norms of society (see 1.1). Max thereafter asks the students the reason why someone else's identity would provoke them, which might help the students to see and reflect on their own position (see 2.5.1). In this way, Max challenges oppression by altering the discourse and questioning what is perceived as normal, by encouraging self-reflection.

In summary, this section has illustrated that the teachers are aware of the fact that norms can be challenged by the way they act and speak and they have slightly different ideas about which norms are important in their ESL classrooms. Like Onatra and Peña (2004) stress, different teachers have different views on norms and values, which means that each classroom will have different norms (see 2.1). A good relationship to students was pointed out as important by one
teacher. In addition, the way teachers speak and act can reflect Othering and a tolerance perspective. This in turn, might be a result of formulations in the curriculum. The following section will treat the last of the themes identified in the data, namely, learning from reflection.

4.5 Learning from reflection

As seen in section 4.4, reflection is necessary when working with NCP, both self-reflection and reflection together with colleagues, for example through discussions about mistakes, events and experiences (see 2.5.2). Neither one of the curriculum or syllabus mention reflection in this specific context, however the curriculum explains that teachers should "cooperate with other teachers in order to achieve the goals of education" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 9) and that students should "develop their ability to think critically, examine facts and relationships, and appreciate the consequences of different alternatives" (Skolverket, 2013, p. 5). As explained above, reflection can be used to create understanding, and it is therefore a crucial part of NCP. The teachers were therefore asked about self-reflection and learning from mistakes. Kim explains how they reflect on mistakes together in the office in the excerpt below:

You have colleagues with whom you feel like you can bring up something that has happened [...] when you might have done something wrong or you might find a solution together. (Kim)

Kim explains that the relationship between the teacher colleagues is crucial for the teacher profession. One must feel comfortable to speak about difficult situations that might have surfaced in the classroom, and one such example can be mistakes. Björkman (2010) means that one can become self aware by meeting other people's views and by learning from their mistakes, as well as that the perception of what is normal can change from person to person. Some mistakes can make the teacher feel bad about what has transpired. However mistakes are a product of participation in the creation of norms (see 2.5.2). Kumashiro (2002) explains that a central part of gaining new
knowledge is to learn from one's mistakes (see 2.5.2). It is therefore good to question one's own teaching, and as the teacher is usually alone in the classroom, it is necessary to discuss difficult subjects together with colleagues in order to gain a wider perspective of the events that transpire. Benesch (1999) argues that CT is developed through dialogue (see 2.3), which is why it is important to discuss with colleagues and then continue to be self reflective toward one's own teaching. The teacher is bound to make mistakes, and Charlie explains, in the excerpt below, that self-reflection is crucial as a teacher:

Yes, I experience that you do that as a teacher, or that I do that as a teacher all the time. If I had done that way, how would it had turned out instead? You question yourself and the way you work. It is somehow innate. The day you stop doing it, I think you should change profession really. It is very important, but very strenuous too.  
(Charlie)

Just as Kim explains that it is important to reflect together with colleagues, Charlie means that it is important to be self reflective of one's own teaching. However, one can question if it is really an innate ability, as Charlie seems to imply. In order to be self-reflective one must also apply CTS, and question one's own practices. Max also builds onto that and explains: "I never make a course in the same way. You have to change all the time". Which shows an awareness of the fact that the same course can be taught in a variety of ways, depending on different students and situations. Charlie voices, in the excerpt below, that putting the tasks expressed in the steering documents into practice can be tricky:

The language in the curriculum and in our knowledge requirements and subject syllabi is very abstract. And what we do in the classroom is very concrete. And we are constantly trying to get these two to meet. (Charlie)
Charlie is saying that the language in the steering documents is "very abstract" and that teachers need to interpret them in order to turn it into practice. Because of the abstract language, the perception of values and what is considered important to transfer to students is highly subjective and dependent on individual teachers (see 2.1). However, in extension, this perception permeates not only the transfer of values, but NCP too. The subjective attitudes to what values that are seen as important interconnect with NCP, which is dependent on individual teachers' attitudes toward using NCP in their classroom, as well as individual teachers' interpretation of steering documents (see 2.5.2). Forrest too observed in his 2012 study, that teachers can feel discomfort toward teaching about certain issues, because they lack terms and positive language from higher ranked staff and educational policies (see 2.2).

To summarize, norms are present wherever there is interaction (see 1.1.1) and norms are, therefore, constantly being negotiated, reproduced and questioned in the English classroom by both teachers and students (see 2.4). Teachers might, therefore, either challenge norms or reproduce norms (see 2.5, 2.5.1). Additionally, Benesch (1999) explains that CT is developed through dialogue and students are not only passive recipients, but they are also participating in the creation of norms (see 2.3). The teacher is the most important person in the process of negotiating norms, as it is the teacher who directly influences the students, interprets the curriculum and transfers norms, values and beliefs (see 2.1). Finally, the curriculum might, as Kaloniaityté (2014) and Martinsson and Reimers (2014) claim, reflect the prevailing norms and values of Swedish society. Also, Kim, Charlie and Max show that they are aware of the way in which norms are played out in the classroom and in society, and how these norms can create inclusion and possibilities for some, and exclusion and limitations for others (see 2.4). However, there is a need for a meta-language for teachers, to be able to discuss the abstract terminology found in the steering documents. The following and concluding chapter discusses the major findings of this case study and their relevance to professional practice for ESL teachers.
5. Conclusions and implications for the teaching of English

Returning now to the research questions formulated for the present study. Firstly, what is expressed in the Swedish National Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School and the subject syllabus for English, concerning societal norms, was investigated. The study found that societal norms are reflected in the curriculum, such as fundamental values to promote equality, justice and understanding. These values can be said to reflect dominating norms in Swedish society, such as "ethics borne by Christian tradition" (see 4.1). In addition, certain formulations in the curriculum might promote Education about the Other and a tolerance perspective to teaching (see 4.4). It was therefore suggested that teachers should assume a norm critical perspective when interpreting the curriculum.

Furthermore, a tension was found in the curriculum as teachers should transfer certain values but also encourage different ways of thinking. NCP might bridge this tension since it posits that students and teachers should engage in dialogue in order to broaden their perspectives.

The subject syllabus for English indicates skills that students should develop, such as critically examining facts and relationships, discussing different perspectives and life situations. The results show that a NC perspective can be interpreted in the different course aims, such as critical reading of literature (see 4.3), in order to create awareness of how norms are reflected in written and spoken language.

Secondly, the study aimed to investigate which norms and values Swedish ESL teachers find important to address in their classrooms and how they approach norms in their English teaching. The study showed that interpretation of the syllabus is subjective, as all teachers showcased different ideas about which norms they think are important in their ESL classroom. They also suggested different ways of approaching norms, such as solving conflicts, adapting to the students' different needs and preventing degrading treatment by initiating student discussions.
All teachers interviewed expressed that some norms should be transferred to students, and that others should be questioned in the ESL classroom. In regards to this, one teacher accentuated that a good relationship to students is crucial for the teaching of norms to be successful. In addition, all teachers said it is important to intervene when students utter degrading comments. However, they might not all be aware of the fact that such comments are rooted in oppressive norms.

One teacher interpreted the charge of working norm critically, as adapting the teaching to students' specific needs. The other two explained it is important to question prevailing norms of both society and the school context. In addition, one teacher considered it important to question and discuss the steering documents, since all students might not benefit from teaching within the frame of the norms set out in educational policies. The results of the study suggest that teachers are influenced by the steering documents, as they all referred to the curriculum and subject syllabus when they reflected on how they work with norms.

A discrepancy was found between how the teachers articulated how they perceive NCP when compared to their practical work, as they all stated that norms should be questioned, at the same time they all said they rely on English textbooks to address topics about equal treatment and diversity. As mentioned in section 4.3, NCP posits that one should question which norms are being reflected in the material. On the one hand, the study has showcased that how teachers articulate themselves as well as how they act, might either enforce or question norms, which the study participants seem to be aware of (see 4.4). On the other hand, a tolerance perspective rather than a NC perspective could be seen in the way that the teachers articulate themselves, such as saying: "it's okay to be different, it isn't strange" (see 4.5). One way that teachers address and work with norms was shown to be through dialogue, both with students and with colleagues (see 4.5). This could lead to the development of CTS, which is a part of NCP (see 2.5).

Lastly, the interpretation of the steering documents is subjective, which gives teachers opportunities to address and illuminate societal norms in the ESL classroom. Thus, a NC lens can
be applied in order to critically discuss which norms the documents promote. One of the study participants empathized the need to discuss the abstract language in the steering documents, in order to establish a meta-language about the tasks set out for teachers. Teachers could benefit from research concerning how to address abstract terminology concerning norms, which is often found in steering documents. If teachers had a meta-language, which could make abstract ideas more hands-on, it would be easier to discuss norms and educational practices with colleagues.

5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The present study is too small to make any generalizations or definite statements about how teachers approach norms in their ESL classroom. However, the study has identified areas for future research. A larger study could be conducted with more teacher interviews and classroom observations where one can analyze classroom interaction in order to yield further insight into how teachers can connect NCP with the teaching of ESL. The study showed that there is a need to create awareness of how oppressive norms are conveyed through language both by individuals and by educational policies. Educational policies could be further investigated and cross-examined in order to create a meta-language, which would serve to assume a NC perspective in a systematic and concrete way. One way to create awareness could be through in-service training, since courses in NCP have only recently become a part of teacher training curricula in Sweden. The study has shown how NCP can be used to solve direct conflicts, however there is also a need to create awareness about how NCP can be used to prevent degrading treatment and to foster equal treatment. For the purpose of connecting theory and practice, further research could then evaluate the implementation of NCP in schools or teams of ESL teachers, as the study showed that teachers might feel hesitant to address oppressive norms.

In conclusion, the aim of this study was to explore what Swedish steering documents express about norms and how certified ESL teachers consider and work with norms in their classrooms. Steering documents relevant to the teaching of English were examined as well as interviews with three teachers. The study has yielded an insight into how the task of working with
norms can be interpreted as well as into teachers' attitudes toward working with norms. More research is needed, however the study provides some inspiration for pre-service as well as in-service ESL teachers on how they might strengthen their practice by working norm critically.
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Hej!
Vi är två lärarstudenter som skriver examensarbete, med inriktning mot ämneslärare i engelska på gymnasiet, på Lunds Universitet Campus Helsingborg. Uppsatser syftar till att undersöka engelsklärares tankar om och kring normer i klassrummet.


Att Du deltar är värdefullt för oss, tack på förhand!

Med vänlig hälsning,
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Appendix 2. Interview manuscript

Intervjumanus

Presentera oss
Presentera studien
Intervju på svenska
Längd
Medgivande att delta
Anonymitet
Rätt att avbryta intervjun når som helst
Medgivande att spela in intervjun
Plats:
Tid:
Namn:
Undervisar kurser i Engelska:
Antal år i läraryrket:

1. Kan du kort beskriva dina olika engelskaklasser?
   - Vilka program?
   - Kan du säga något om eleverna?

   - Hur arbetar du med likabehandling i engelskklassrummet?
     - Kan du ge några exempel?

3. Brukar du tänka på normer när du undervisar i engelska?
   - Hur påverkar det din undervisning tror du?

4. Läroplanen understryker att "Skolan har uppgiften att till eleverna överföra värden, förmedla kunskaper och förbereda dem för att arbeta och verka i samhället" (Skolverket, 2011, p. 6)
   - Vilka normer och värden tycker du är viktiga i ditt/dina engelskaklassrum?
     - Vilka normer i dina engelskaklassrum behöver synliggöras och/eller ifrågasättas?
     - Kan du ge exempel?

5. Hur gör du för att ta tillvara på olika erfarenheter och synsätt i dina elevgrupper för att använda dessa som resurs?
   - Kan du ge exempel?
   - Hur mycket utrymme får eleverna att prata? Ta del i planering?
   - Vilka språk tillåts?
   - På vilket sätt kan det vara olika mellan olika elevgrupper tycker du?
- Hur hanterar du elever som uttrycker starka åsikter som går emot de värden som lärare ska upprätthålla?

7. Skolverket lyfter fram normkritiskt arbetssätt som ett sätt att arbeta med normer.
- Vad betyder normkritik för dig?
  - Är det något du använder dig av och hur i så fall?

8. Det normkritiska perspektivet talar om att man ska vara självreflektiv och lära sig av sina misstag. Har du några tankar om eller erfarenheter av det?
- Har du varit med i en situation i klassrummet där något gick fel och du tänkt att du skulle velat göra annorlunda?
  - Vad hände?
  - Vad gjorde du då?
  - Hur löstes situationen?

9. Har du några övriga erfarenheter eller tankar som du skulle vilja dela med dig av?
- Kan du komma på något exempel på när du lyckades synliggöra normer och det ledde till en förändring på något sätt?