

Finding Room: Critical Literacy in GY2000 and Lgy11

A Deductive Content Analysis of English Language Education Policy in Sweden



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Abstract

Through a deductive content analysis, this paper aimed to elucidate a place for critical literacy as an educational approach based on research by Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys in the Swedish curricula for upper secondary school, GY2000 and Lgy11, respectively. After reading research by Cabau and Hult, showing how the curricula propagates the position of English in the curriculum, and the Swedish society, this analysis sought to make the potential place for critical literacy alongside the English language clear and tangible. After analyzing the curricula, it became clear that both GY2000 and Lgy11 mainly focused on facilitating functional knowledge of English so that students could best take part in a globalized society where English is the main language of communication, with marginal space for critical literacy. Where critical literacy was concerned, Lgy11 explicitly mentioned that social issues should form the content of education, with other English-speaking cultures as focal points. The main focus, however, was still on gaining knowledge of English for the sake of functional knowledge. This places critical literacy's role on the sidelines, putting the decision of whether to include a social justice focus in their education or not in the hands of each individual teacher. Another area where critical literacy had a place was when the curriculum mentioned analyzing language, where critical literacy could be worked with to the extent that students could critically analyze language and try to make clear how the text was trying to position them and others in the world. This paper then finishes with a discussion on how critical literacy's place in both curricula relate to each other as well as pointing towards potential directions research could take.

Keywords: critical literacy, policy research, content analysis, ESL education.

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Introduction

Language...does things: it constructs social categories, it gives orders, it persuades us, it justifies, explains, gives reasons, excuses. It constructs reality. It moves people against other people (TRC, 1998: 7, 124, 294)

This quote is meant to encapsulate the power in language and words, that when we as language users put words onto the world and start naming things we also create the world as we name it, shaping it for better or worse for those around us. This idea is central to an educational approach established by Paulo Freire called critical literacy, which shows, as Hillary Janks explains, that through critical literacy students can not only learn how to read, but to read critically and thus become agents of change in transforming their surrounding world (2010, p. 42). This sense of agency can then be used to create beneficial social change where it is needed, promoting social justice, which is yet another central point of a critical literacy education, as Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys (2002, p. 384) explain after a literature review and case study of critical literacy in educational practice.

When reading the current curriculum for the English subject in Sweden, it becomes clear that students are to do much reading of the world in the process of gaining knowledge of the English language. In conjunction with this goal, they are also to develop knowledge of the cultures in other English-speaking countries (Skolverket, 2011). But does the curriculum stop at letting students read and reflect on the world, or does it also craft them as agents of change following the intent of the educational approach of critical literacy? How can critical literacy as an educational approach fit into the current curriculum of the English subject in Sweden? Through a deductive content analysis, this paper aims to answer these questions by examining both the present curriculum for the English subject, Lgy11, as well as the previous one, GY2000, through the lens of dimensions on how critical literacy fits into education developed

Lewis et al. (2002). The focus lies on determining the place for critical literacy in Lgy11 since it is the curriculum currently in use, but GY2000 will also be examined for comparative purposes in order to place the analysis in a historical context that, with the help of previous research, elucidates why and how English as a language is propagated in the curricula. This is done, while at the same time connecting the analysis to research conducted on critical literacy in educational practice, so as to concretize what space there is for critical literacy in the curriculum into tangible results. However, before any other work is done, the work of others is first presented in order to provide a context of curriculum research and language education for the present analysis to stem from.

Implicit Ideas and a Transcultural English Language in the Curricula

In this section, previous research on syllabi is presented and there are two reasons for this: One, the aim is to show how similar analyses have been done on syllabi in order to ground the work done in this paper in an established field of research. And two, by presenting other research on syllabi and the language therein, the present analysis is contrasted against the others, establishing relevancy and how this paper differentiates itself from the other analyses. First, an analysis of the Hungarian curriculum will be presented because it exemplifies both the strengths and challenges of interpretive curriculum analysis, as Moore & Wiley (2015, p. 152) explain it: understanding the sociopolitical factors that lie behind policies, impacting their interpretation and implementation.

In a critical discourse analysis of the National Core Curriculum (NCC) in Hungary, Neag (2015) sought to investigate how media literacy was how constructed and defined in the curriculum inside a political landscape where freedom-of-the-press issues were criticized. By including both the political context surrounding the composing and implementation of media literacy in the curriculum and how the curriculum itself constructed media literacy, Neag was able to make the following conclusion: Media literacy was indeed present in the national

curriculum but that teachers were not given explicit information on how to include media literacy in their teaching. It was therefore possible for media literacy to be handled in diverging ways, depending on the teachers' interpretations, whether that be based in art studies, critical thinking or other ways (2015, p. 43). The strength in this analysis comes from how it draws its conclusions from the sociopolitical context surrounding the NCC and media literacy within it.

Another similar study done on the Swedish curricula by Tholin (2012) examined whether there was an ethnic bias towards Swedish culture in English-language education and if "Swedishness" was taught as the norm, thus privileging students with Swedish background and excluding non-Swedish students. A discourse analysis of the curricula was used and Tholin found that there indeed was a bias towards Swedish culture present in the objectives of the curriculum from 1994, where students were to make comparisons between Swedish culture and other cultures in order to pass. As Tholin puts it: "[...] when comparing English and Swedish cultural expressions, students with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds would not be able to achieve the objectives, regardless of how much English they knew and of how much they knew about conditions in the English-speaking world" (2012, p. 261).

With this example, Tholin highlights something that the curriculum does not explicitly state but which is still very much present and part of the words on the paper, showing the usefulness of discourse analysis and how it can highlight *meaning* behind language in policies and curricula that otherwise would not be made explicit, which is part of the purpose of the analysis in this paper.

When it comes to the subject of English, Beatrice Cabau-Lampa has done extensive research on its place, development, and history in the Swedish curriculum. In a study detailing the historical rise of the subject of English in Sweden, English was first found to be a subject of lower importance compared to German and French. But knowledge of the English

language quickly rose in popularity, and indeed necessity, in the middle of the 20th century, partly due to an interest in American culture, as well as financial and sociopolitical ties to the United States being established after the second World War, when German as the main foreign language taught in schools was replaced by English (Cabau, 2009, p. 135-136). Another reason used to justify the importance of English in language teaching was that:

[...] a new Europe was being built, and Sweden had to take an active part in it. Because English was now fully acknowledged as a universal language, and the phenomenon of internationalization was gaining importance, Swedes would be able to discover and understand what was going on in the world. By doing so, they would fulfil their civic duty (i.e., they would contribute to the prosperity of the Swedish nation [...]) (Cabau, 2009, p. 137).

In order for Sweden to grow internationally and establish itself amongst other countries growing after the second World War, Swedes had to learn English, and thus the subject grew in importance. This importance, for Swedes to learn English in order to participate in an internationalized world, would remain unchanged in the curriculum even until the GY2000 curriculum, as well as the Lgy11 one. The importance of English, functioning alongside Cauba's claims, can be found in this line from GY2000: "The ability to use English is necessary for studies, travel in other countries and for social and professional international contacts of different kinds. The subject of English thus plays a central role in the Swedish school. [My translation]" (Skolverket, 2000, p. 84). Similarly, Lgy11 focuses on the social, political and economic gains students can take part in through speaking English (Skolverket, 2011), thus continuing to establish knowledge of English as necessary and important. Cabau's research is here used to foreground the present analysis and coding of both curriculums, by establishing a historical and sociopolitical picture of the presence of the English language as a

subject in both GY2000 and Lgy11, once again to provide necessary sociopolitical context which Moore & Wiley (2015, p. 152) call for from policy researchers.

In yet another similar study, Hult (2012) finds, through a discourse analysis of the current Swedish curriculum for English, that the English language is framed as a transcultural language which students are required to have knowledge of, again connecting to Cabau's study on how English rose in importance and prevalence in Swedish education. In the curriculum, English becomes a tool that students are to use in order to navigate both their local and global world, with an emphasis on how the English language is easily accessible in Swedish society, even though the curriculum initially connects the English language to English-speaking countries. As Hult puts it: "In this way, it [the English language] is characterized not as a foreign language but as a Swedish language. The global is made local, in other words, through the medium of English" (2012, p. 239). Of course, English does not only have a function inside the Swedish society. In the curriculum there exists a perspective on the potential benefits of globalization framed through studies and employment abroad, for which knowledge of English is essential. Hult states that English in the Swedish curriculum not only functions as a *lingua franca*, but also *lingua academica* and *lingua economica*, and that indeed "[t]he English language is characterized as a tool for constructing Sweden as a legitimate (local) site for globalization while also positioning Sweden and its people as participants on the global stage" (2012, p. 240). All of this turns the English language into a transcultural language within the Swedish society, both allowing Sweden to exert influence outwards and also change the local culture from within. What is to be gathered from Hult's study for the present analysis is the interpretation that the English language is proposed as a tool for students to use both when navigating the local and global worlds. It therefore becomes important to note that not all utterances in the curriculum that mention the English language and English-speaking countries should be read as asking the students to understand

and reflect on differences in language and culture, which is one of the points of critical literacy as a pedagogical approach (and will be detailed in the next section of this paper). Instead, some sections in the curriculum view the English language in functional terms for the sake of globalization and that students need to learn English in order to have a place in the interconnected world.

Now that the presence of English in the Swedish curricula has been brought to light, in addition to how a curriculum can hold implicit ideas, critical literacy as an educational approach will be detailed next to provide a theoretical base for the present analysis.

The Basis of Critical Literacy: An Educational Approach

In this section, critical literacy as a pedagogical approach will first be outlined in more general terms based on the seminal work on critical literacy by Paulo Freire called *Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (2014). Afterwards, the focus will shift to how critical literacy is enacted practically with educators, teachers, and students in mind, in order to connect the pedagogical factors of critical literacy to its potential place in the Swedish curriculum for the English subject. First, a framing of critical literacy.

Critical literacy stems from an ideology concerned with the liberation and education of the oppressed by giving them the power to free themselves, and their oppressors, from inequality and unjust subjugation. This is done through a pedagogy in two parts, which first unveils the nature of the ongoing oppression for the oppressors, and then strives to maintain actual permanent liberation for all (Freire, 2014, p. 54). The use of language to enact power (“[...] to *name* the world, to change it [...]” (Freire, 2014, p. 88)) is key in this pedagogy, and although critical literacy is difficult to define, social justice and social action lies at the heart of every matter to do with critical literacy (Janks, 2010, p. 40).

For critical literacy educators, the focus therefore lies in providing students with a literacy of the empowering kind, that has students look at and question the power in texts and

words. Practically speaking, this means that educators should enable students to see themselves as agents of change by collaboratively working with them to see injustice in their world, name it, and then change the situation for the better through social analysis, cultural critique and social action (Rogers, 2014, p. 242). Based in readings of Freire, Janks explains that “[r]ecognising that a situation is less than ideal and naming what is wrong as a problem are the first step [*sic*] in transformative social action” (2010, p. 42). Part of recognizing what is wrong comes, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, from awareness that language and words have power, and that this power is realized when students read the world and the word. In a sense, this means that:

[...] taking a critical literacy approach to reading, we read underneath, behind, and beyond texts; we do not consider texts to be unbiased; we explore alternative readings; we focus on the beliefs and values of the authors; and we work for social justice and change (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, paraphrased in Ko & Wang, 2009, p. 177).

A critical literacy educator will therefore work with the students to critically read texts and see what power is expressed in them; who is being excluded and made powerless in texts; what can be done to improve the situation for those without power. An example of this can be found in Vasquez (2014, p. 104) where she and students read an informational flyer for a school barbecue and concluded that the “our” in “our barbecue” did not include vegetarians, since no alternatives to meat were proposed in flyer. Continuing with the theme of what critical literacy looks like in the hands of educators, Lewison et al. (2002) have created a study where they distilled working definitions of critical literacy and later looked at how these definitions were practically applied in teaching. Since this study provides a theoretical basis

for the codes and themes used in the analysis of the Swedish curricula, its results will be summarized briefly here.

According to Lewison et al. (2002, p. 382-384), for teachers working with critical literacy, education means enabling practices that **disrupt the commonplace**, i.e. problematize texts and critically ask how the texts are trying to position the reader and create a certain world; **interrogate multiple viewpoints**, i.e. seeing yourself in others' shoes; **focus on sociopolitical issues**, i.e. looking at how individuals can be affected by, and indeed affect, actors larger than individuals, such as institutions or organizations; and **take action and promote social justice**, i.e. following Freire's pedagogy and working to create a more just world for those without power by taking action against inequality. These four dimensions functioned as focal points for the teaching practices observed in Lewison et al.'s study and different teachers were found to enact the dimensions differently based on familiarity with the theory and years of experience as a teacher. Of course, teachers work in different ways based on different curricula, whereas working with critical literacy can be expressed in more general terms. In order to make critical literacy relevant for Swedish teachers, it thus becomes necessary to explain the curriculum theory from which Swedish teachers work and this will be detailed in the next section.

Curriculum Theory from a Swedish perspective

Since the purpose of this paper is to analyze two curricula (GY2000 and Lgy11) and how one changed from the other, with respect to the inclusion of critical literacy, research and theories done on these curricula in general will be presented here in order to contextualize the present analysis to these Swedish curricula.

A major change between the two curricula was that Lgy11 did not include explicit references to goals that students were to achieve through their schooling. There instead existed a focus on what knowledge the individual course was to include followed by grading

criteria contextualized as abilities that students should be able to perform. The grading criteria are divided by qualitative phrases, with an example being that one grade can state: “a *relatively well*-functioning way”, where the next grade will instead state: “a *well*-functioning way” which it is up to the teacher to judge and interpret when grading is at hand. This is similar to how it was in the previous curricula from Lgr 80 and Lgy 70, all according to Göran Linde (2012, p. 132-133). Additionally, a different change enacted in the newer curricula was a focus on goals steering the contents of the education, or “målstyrning”, instead of the curriculum determining the content of the lessons. As Linde writes: “The governing intention behind the previous syllabi was to prescribe specific content, a path for studies. The new syllabi instead prescribe goals [...]” (2012, p. 129). It therefore becomes clear that the teacher, by interpreting the goals the students are to achieve, must plan the lessons around these goals and create content based on them. This is something Hornberger (2002) calls the implementational space in curricula, which means that individual interpretation of curricula, such as those by teachers, play a key part in the implementation of policy. Part of this shift towards qualitative goals, and more freedom for the teacher’s interpretations, can be seen as a consequence of the discourse regarding education policy in the 1990’s, where education moved from being centralized to being decentralized and local-oriented, according to Ulla Johansson, who gives an overview of research done on curricula in Sweden between 1990 and 2000 (2003, p. 576-577).

Content Analysis and Coding: A Methodological Approach

Since the purpose of this paper was to analyze the contents of a policy document based in readings on critical literacy, finding qualitative connections and codes was central to the method. A deductive, qualitative content analysis was therefore chosen as an appropriate method and it will be detailed next.

In explaining qualitative content analysis, Zhang & Wildemuth stated that

[...] qualitative content analysis emphasizes an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner (2009, p. 1).

Qualitative content analysis is here contrasted against a quantitative analysis. To use an example, one could do a quantitative analysis of a policy document counting the number of times the word “grammar” occurs in the document and draw conclusions from there. A qualitative analysis could instead try to see what the word “grammar” *means* in the context of the policy document and the surrounding theory. In order to get at this *meaning*, the researcher develops codes and themes for the analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 3). In the deductive method, the researcher starts by looking at the theory surrounding the topic, then forms ideas and designs the research project accordingly, before starting the actual data collection and analysis. Worth noting is that this process is cyclical and that the researcher can go back and forth between data and theory, and continuously revise the research process, as described by Berg. He also iterates that the researcher should have a focused question and aim from the start, to make this cyclical process manageable (Berg, 2006, p. 19-20). Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña echo this point when they talk about deductive coding: a list of codes taken from the conceptual framework surrounding the study that the researcher brings into the research process (2013, p. 81). For the present analysis, this means that a comprehensive understanding of critical literacy’s role in education, alongside previous research on the English language and subject in the Swedish curriculum, was first established and elucidated, so the researcher could start the analyzing process with a clear view of what was analyzed, as

well as what was to be found through the analysis. This was where writing by Freire (2014) and Lewison et al. (2002) functioned as a theoretical base for critical literacy, while research by Hult (2012), Cabau (2009), Tholin (2014), Linde (2012), and Johansson (2003) provided context for the Swedish curricula and, more specifically, the English language in the curricula.

The next part of the process was a theoretical overview, during which the researcher can start with an initial coding segment of the theory and the relevant findings therein (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 2). A code, according to Saldaña, “[...] is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (2012, p. 3). Codes are thus used to capture the meaning in data and make that meaning explicit. The coding process itself was done in two cycles, the First Cycle and The Second Cycle. The First Cycle was done to assign codes to chunks of data and begin the analysis. In the present analysis, this mean that both curricula were read and codes that reflected both perspectives on the English language and codes that were relevant to critical literacy were brought to light. In the Second Cycle, the established codes were then grouped together into themes and categories (Miles et al., 2013, p. 73; Saldaña, 2012, p. 12-13). The Second Cycle provided the bulk of the analysis and the results in this paper, where previous research done on the curricula for English was combined with coding of the curricula based on readings from the theory in order to form categories that fit and/or do not fit critical literacy as a pedagogical approach. This then showed where critical literacy’s place in the current curriculum was, and how a teacher could choose to interpret the curriculum in order to work with critical literacy.

Of note is that, within the First Cycle, there are 25 different approaches to coding, each one serving a different purpose depending on the aim of the research. One such approach is labeled *Hypothesis Coding* and is the approach of choice since it is deemed appropriate

together with a content analysis as described by Zhang & Wildemuth above. Saldaña (2009, p. 123-124) also states that *Hypothesis Coding* is an appropriate method of choice in conjunction with a content analysis when the researcher starts the analysis from a list of codes from theory, which fits my analyzing process where I grounded myself in the work done by Lewison et al. (2002). As Miles et al. state: “This [hypothesis coding] is the application of a researcher generated, predetermined list of codes onto qualitative data specifically to assess a researcher-generated hypothesis” (2013, p. 78). This predetermined list of codes consists of the categories and dimensions detailing critical literacy in an educational context developed by Lewison et al. (2002). *Hypothesis Coding* was also chosen since critical literacy is never explicitly mentioned in the different Swedish curricula, thus making it difficult to do a discourse analysis of the policy documents similar to the analyses mentioned previously, like Neag (2015). The running hypothesis was that both curricula would include some readings related to critical literacy, but that Lgy11 would feature more focus on other cultures in different ways than from an English language perspective. With critical literacy not appearing explicitly in the Swedish curricula, this explained the process of the present analysis, since the purpose of this paper was to analyze how critical literacy could fit into the different curricula when critical literacy is not explicitly mentioned in the curricula. Finally, the results from the two analyses was compared in order to say something about what critical literacy means in the current curriculum with a historical context, which Hellspong (2001, p. 78-80) highlights as a benefit from a comparative analysis. It is important to note that a comparative analysis in itself does not elicit why changes between the objects of analysis are/are not present, but can only point out the existence of such similarities/differences. As it is the purpose of the present analysis to highlight possible differences/similarities, a comparative method is deemed appropriate.

The analysis was broken down into two parts: Firstly, the two curricula, GY2000 and Lgy11, were analyzed side by side, with each dimension of critical literacy from Lewison et al. (2002) thematically connecting relevant parts of each curricula. In the concluding part, the results from these two analyses was compared and discussed, in order to be able to say something about critical literacy's place in the current curriculum with regards to a change from one curriculum to another for context.

Since the work done by Lewison et al. (2002) is essential to understanding how critical literacy works in the field of education, and because the analysis will be presented based on their research, the dimensions they developed after an extensive literature review and case study will here be reiterated briefly so that they are readily available for application and categorization after the analysis:

1) Disrupt the commonplace, i.e. problematize texts and critically ask how the texts are trying to position the reader and create a certain world and “seeing the everyday through new lenses” (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 386).

2) Interrogate multiple viewpoints, i.e. seeing yourself in others' shoes.

3) Focus on sociopolitical issues, i.e. looking at how individuals can be affected by, and indeed affect, actors larger than individuals, such as institutions or organizations, by going beyond the personal.

4) Take action and promote social justice, i.e. following Freire's pedagogy and working to create a more just world for those without power by taking action against inequality.

Analyzing the Curricula: Finding Room for Critical Literacy

Due to limitations of space, only the readings that capture the meaning of how the English subject is portrayed in the curriculum and the ones that are pertinent to critical literacy will be brought forward in this section. This is worth noting, since the intention of this

analysis is not to say that the entirety of both of the curricula deals with critical literacy to some extent, but instead the purpose is to show specific instances where critical literacy can work with the curricula in mind.

Disrupting the Commonplace in GY2000 and Lgy11

This dimension from Lewison et al. asks for space to problematize all subjects of study where students are to constantly question what texts are trying to say and how texts are trying to position them and others in the world. This dimension also deals with representation in media, since students should be asked to question popular media and the portrayals therein (2002, p. 383).

Where in GY2000 does this dimension fit? Initially, in the “Purpose of the subject”, GY2000 talks about the English language and what students are to gain from knowledge of the English language in terms of how the students are to function in Swedish society, given the prevalence of the English language there, as well as in a globalized world where a multitude of countries share English as a common language. As Hult (2012) read, this first part of GY2000 deals with English as a “transcultural” language and keeps its focus on students developing functional knowledge of the English language. The curriculum does not necessarily, so far, have the students ask questions about the content they come into contact with. This focus on English as a transcultural language which the students are to learn continues until further down in the curriculum, where the focus instead shifts to having the students “[...] broaden their perspectives on a growing English-speaking world with its multifaceted cultures. [My translation]” (Skolverket, 2000, p. 84). This passage does not necessarily mandate that the students are to start asking questions about the input they receive. However, there is potential for the teacher to create a more critical discussion on differences and similarities between English-speaking cultures, thus, somewhat, enabling the first dimension of critical literacy. This can be achieved by having the students see the everyday

through new lenses (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 386), thus broadening their perspectives on the world. However, it should be noted that working in the first dimension can be difficult for teachers, as Lewison et al. state that teachers traditionally work as transmitters of knowledge from curricula to student, rather than facilitators of critical discussions (2002, p. 383). This top-down perspective is, until now, prevalent in GY2000, thus making it difficult to fit the first dimension into it in a qualitative manner.

The “Aim of the subject [My translation]” in GY2000 continues with a focus on the students receiving knowledge of language acquisition to facilitate future language gains before moving on to “Goals of the Subject [My translation]”. In this section of GY2000, there is one goal in particular that fits itself to the first dimension of critical literacy, and it is the one stating that students are to learn how to critically read, understand and reflect on the fact and fiction they read both in and out of school (Skolverket, 2000, p. 84). Given that reading is connected to literacy skills in the curriculum, reflection seems to be used together with making reading a tool for further learning, in future academic and professional contexts. On the other hand, critical reflection can also be taken to include what Lewison et al. call part of the first dimension, namely a focus on analyzing texts to see how they position readers and shape identity (2002, p. 383). This type of work is exemplified by letting students read books that handle issues and subjects slightly unfamiliar to them and let discussions focusing on their relation to reality create deeper understanding (2002, p. 388). This perspective does draw attention away from language learning for the sake of international sociability, but it still lets student critically reflect on the texts they read. The benefit here, as Jordao & Fogaca see it, is that “[r]ather than aiming at adapting readers to texts, merely leading them to recognize text genres or fixed text formats, our perspective focuses on developing ownership of texts, which implies more than the possibility of ‘understanding’ texts” (2012, p. 78). It is therefore

possible to follow the goals of GY2000, while still letting students critically work with texts and read the world in critical ways, thus enabling the first dimension of critical literacy.

When analyzing Lgy11, which begins with a more general passage on the subject of English, the start is similar to GY2000 where English is positioned as a transcultural language the students need knowledge of in order to participate in a globalized English-speaking society. However, the final sentence, similar to the previous quote from GY2000, opens up for the first dimension of critical literacy, when it states that “[k]nowledge of English can also provide new perspectives on the surrounding world, enhanced opportunities to create contacts, and greater understanding of different ways of living” (Skolverket, 2011). Lgy11 once again mentions an understanding of other cultures as part of education together with new perspectives, which opens up for critical discussions on differences and similarities in cultures and aiding the students in seeing their everyday world through new lenses, which fits the first dimension of critical literacy.

Moving on to the “Aim of the subject” in Lgy11, this part continues with an emphasis on functional language knowledge of English. Students are to gain confidence in speaking English, as well as develop all-round communicative skills supported by strategies to help them adapt their language to different situations. Students should also develop correctness in language (Skolverket, 2011). This first part of the “Aim of the subject” feeds back into both Hult’s (2012) and Cabaus’s (2009) research on the English subject, where the focus lies on developing functional knowledge so that students can participate properly in a globalized, English-speaking world. It is in the next paragraph where the focus shifts back to other cultures, with language as a focal point. Lgy11 states that “[t]eaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture, and give them the opportunity to develop plurilingualism where skills in different languages interact and support each other. Teaching should also help students develop language awareness and knowledge of how a language is

learned through and outside teaching contexts” (Skolverket, 2011). It is clear that when looking at different cultures, the focus is on linguistic differences and similarities that can aid in developing plurilingualism, thus limiting the type of content that can be brought forward.

However, there is space for the first dimension here as well, when Lewison et al. mention that students should study language itself and how it can shape identities and world views in different cultures (2002, p. 383), albeit as an aside, since the curriculum keeps the focus on language learning. This perspective on language between cultures also opens up for a discussion that follows Janks’ reasoning on the relationship between power and language, when she talks about how language can shape of we view others (2010, p. 45). She also exemplifies practical critical literacy work related to language when mentioning how a class can work with the word *perhaps* and see how it changes the meaning of a sentence (2010, p. 40), an exercise that can follow the above passage from Lgy11 by having students compare and contrast similar adverbs across languages.

Lgy11 does mention a focus on social issues and living conditions in English speaking in the same paragraph, thus inviting different types of work. For example, Rogers (2014, p. 251) found that teachers could design lessons centered around social issues by having students read literature and focus on how experiences in the story were relevant to their own personal experiences. Given that English is such a global language, literature in English from varying cultures can be relevant, and Rogers uses *The Streets Are Free* by Kurusa to exemplify work on life in poverty and how it relates to students’ personal experiences.

Continuing with the last paragraph of Lgy11, in “Aim of the subject”, there is again a practical focus on language knowledge with the students given opportunities to interact in English and produce output in English, with the aid of different media. It is also stated that the education should make use of the surrounding world as a resource for contacts,

information and learning, while simultaneously letting the students develop literacy skills related to understanding and evaluate information from multiple sources (Skolverket, 2011). As Lewison et al. call for critical literacy education to include popular culture in education (2002, p. 283) this part of the curriculum has a place for the first dimension. Students could, by looking at and questioning media, be taught to evaluate the information they receive in a more critical manner, asking what the information is saying and how it is portraying people of the world, thus learning how to judge and evaluate information with a focus on social justice. For an example of this, Janks (2010, p. 50-52) talks about how students can look at a partial picture of a man running, give feedback on what the picture says, then the full picture of the man (being a handicapped runner) is revealed and the students react to this, reflecting on how their experience changed when they saw the full picture. This example functions to show how what you see and where you see it influences how you think about it and also how you can change how you think about the picture, all in one go. Of course, there is still a focus on functional communicative skills, so the place for the first dimension here is limited and, again, possibly sidelined.

Overall, when it comes to language in general, and more specifically the English language, both GY2000 and Lgy11 share a perspective of English being a transcultural language that students need knowledge of in order to function both in a local and an international context. Students are to develop functional communicational skills and both curricula seem to adopt a straight-forward view of what this means, ie. being able to understand verbal and written communication, the ability to adapt to a variety of situations, and speak correctly. In both curricula, this can enable what Lewison et al. label as a more traditional stance on education, the top-down approach where knowledge is transmitted from teacher to student (2002, p. 383) thus leaving little space for the first dimension of critical literacy that calls for discussions and questions that disrupt the commonplace, which can be

difficult to navigate while imparting knowledge uni-directionally if teachers choose to work this way. Where the first dimension does seem to have place in both curricula is when the matter of broadening, and gaining, new perspectives on other English-speaking cultures. These passages do have a linguistic focus, but there is still some room for the first dimension, such as when GY2000 asks the students to reflect on social issues and different cultures, enabling the students to see the world through different lenses. Similarly, Lgy11, when it also calls for reflection as a goal of the education, students can again be asked to see their world through different lenses, thus disrupting the commonplace.

Reflecting on the Lives of Others in GY2000 and Lgy11

Since critical reflection is part of the second dimension from Lewison et al. (2002), it is fitting that the analysis moves on to focus on this dimension. Starting with GY2000, there are certain passages that are relevant for analysis, in particular the goal which states that students are to reflect on ways of living, cultural expressions and social issues in other cultures, while also developing understanding and tolerance (2000, p. 85).

The second dimension, which in essence asks to for students to see themselves in others' shoes, states that students are "[...] to understand experience and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others and to consider these perspectives concurrently" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). Given that both the second dimension and GY2000 call for an understanding of the lives of people different than our own, there exists an overlapping space to work with. In guiding students to ask questions and (re)consider their personal views, teachers can create discussions grounded in social issues both historical and present, such as when Mosley (2009, p. 46-50) let students talk about the Iraq war and how it connected to personal freedoms in peril during other wars, while connecting the discussion to the students' personal experiences, such as African American history and Japanese history.

A similar goal is put forward in the five goals of Lgy11, one of which states that students should develop “[t]he 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.” This goal is also mirrored in the very first section of the curriculum for English, which emphasizes understanding of other ways of living as part of the education (Skolverket, 2011). (On a side note: it is interesting that the word *tolerance* is used in conjunction with understanding different cultures as a goal in GY2000, while Lgy11 only mentions understanding, foregoing usage of *tolerance*.) Though, for the present analysis, both curricula can be said to include a focus on understanding the culture of others in a general sense, thus opening up for critical discussion that can highlight social justice issues, making differences visible, thus enabling the second dimension of critical literacy.

Another goal from GY2000 that has students reflect on different social situations is one that was mentioned in the previous section, in conjunction with the first dimension, is one to do with critical readings of fact and fiction, both in and out of school (Skolverket, 2002, p. 84). As has been mentioned previously, this goal does not merely let students focus on language in texts and its impact on their view of the world, but also, of course, the contents of what they read and how it relates to the students own reality. To use a previous example, when reading about social issues, such as poverty in Kurusa’s *The Streets Are Free*, students can be asked to relate what they read to their own experiences and start understanding the realities of others (Rogers, 2014, p. 251). While the first dimension of critical literacy can focus on the language part of the mentioned goal from GY2000, the second dimension can instead shift the focus to the content of the stories being read in order to focus on understanding the issues of others.

Later in GY2000, there is another passage highlighting that the ability to reflect on similarities and differences between cultures should be continuously developed and lead to

understanding of other cultures (Skolverket, 2002, p. 85). This passage follows the second dimension in drawing attention to the experiences of people from other cultures as part of the goal of education. However, this focus on other cultures can be seen as connected to functional, social knowledge of English, since the curriculum adds “intercultural competence” to learning about other cultures, thus connecting this goal to previous statements about students being able to function in a globalized world with English as the main language of communication. This, instead of letting the goal be focused squarely on understanding other cultures for the sake of making differences visible, as is the main focus in the second dimension of critical literacy. The connection between the second dimension and GY2000 is there, albeit with slightly different aims, if “intercultural competence” is read together with previous statements in the curriculum about functional competence of English.

In Lgy11, in the middle of the “Aim of the subject” a passage states that students should develop knowledge of other cultures, and the living conditions therein (Skolverket, 2011), thus connecting to the second dimension in giving the opportunity for students to see the world from a different perspective. Drawing from this passage, it would be feasible for a teacher to focus on making differences in cultures and understandings visible for the students in ways that have them reflect on perspectives different from their own, which Lewison et al. call for as part of the second dimension of critical literacy in education (2002, p. 383). In effect, as Abednia & Izadinia (2013, p. 342-343) exemplify it, students can work with textual material with personal relevance in critical ways, guided by qualifiers from the teacher who makes sure that the texts have real-life meaning to the students, in order to create discussions that took into account students’ personal history as well as histories from their classmates and surrounding world.

In summary, some of the passages from the curricula that fit into the first dimension of critical could be reworked to fit the second dimension as well, by shifting the focus from

language to the content of language, while other passages call for a more specific focus on understanding other cultures and the differences they express. This call for understanding fits in with the second dimension of critical literacy which seeks to highlight differences in perspectives and let the students see the world through others' eyes.

A Focus on Social Issues in GY2000 and Lgy11

This third dimension of critical literacy focuses on making sociopolitical issues explicit in teaching, to show how power and language are inextricably connected while drawing attention to the politics that affect daily lives around the world. In this dimension, the intention is therefore to draw the students' attention outwards from their own perspectives, going beyond personal matters to highlight power structures bigger than individuals inside sociopolitical systems (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383).

In GY2000, there is no explicit mention of focus on sociopolitics, which is not surprising given that English is a language subject. When the focus is on matters outside of the individual students, it is delegated to talking about other, and different, cultural expressions and how students are to reflect on, and grow understanding and tolerance for, these cultural differences. This is mentioned in the goals of GY2000, as well as in parts of the "Character and structure of the subject [My translation]" (Skolverket, 2000, p. 84-85). Although, as teachers in the study by Lewison et al. have shown, there is a possibility to open up this focus on other cultures to include a focus on sociopolitical power structures as well. For example, one teacher let a student write a memoir about moving from Eastern Europe to America, and how knowledge of language was crucial when navigating a new social space. This writing led to a discussion on the power language holds over how the students socialized with each other and perceived each other, as well as questioning the power the English language had over access to information and American culture in particular (2002, p. 389). This example shows a possibility in looking to language and cultural differences for a

discussion that can draw attention to the power in local social conventions and how this can impact the sociability of individuals, thus enabling the goal of focusing on understanding other cultures from GY2000, while also including the third dimension of critical literacy.

In Lgy11, there is explicit mention of a focus on social issues in the second paragraph of the “Aim of the subject”, where it states that “[s]tudents should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (Skolverket, 2011). English-speaking countries thus provide the frame for the content of the education, while discussions on social issues such as poverty can form the content of the lessons. For example, Chiola-Nakai (2001) started a discussion about classism with students based on how sports teams with different incomes would dress differently, and how this would affect public perception of the teams. This discussion then turned to the company Nike and the working conditions of manufacturers overseas, highlighting inequalities in wages, as well as the prevalence of certain brands in the students’ lives. This story can function as an example for how the third dimension of critical literacy can be implemented while following Lgy11’s goal of focusing on social issues in English-countries.

Overall, as has been stated before, the focus in both GY2000 and Lgy11 stays on learning English in a functional sense, so students can best find and understand information while socializing in an English-speaking world. However, certain parts of both curricula do open up for focus on social issues and sociopolitics. The parts in GY2000 that focus on social issues and power structures, thus touching on the third dimension, are to do with letting students gain knowledge of, and understand, others’ cultural expressions. An explicit goal is increased tolerance for these other cultures, and the third dimension can provide this by highlighting inequities in local and foreign contexts through discussions. In Lgy11, knowledge of social issues in other cultures is mentioned explicitly as part of the subject,

tying more clearly to the third dimension's focus on highlighting unequal power structures that can govern the lives of students and others in English-speaking countries.

A Call for Action in GY2000 and Lgy11

This final dimension is perceived as *the* dimension of critical literacy by Lewison et al., and here is where calls to action for social justice occur. In the fourth dimension, which focuses on taking action, *praxis* that transforms the world is encouraged. Language that challenges current cultural borders which maintain power and domination of certain groups is also a main part of this dimension (2002, p. 383-384). The focus thus lies on the teacher encouraging students to put the work done through the previous dimensions into concrete practice that strives to change their surrounding world for the benefit of the oppressed and marginalized.

There is no explicit mention of calls to action in GY2000 in the same way that the fourth dimension emphasizes. The focus instead lies on internal reflection on the living conditions of people in other cultures as well as broadening the perspectives on these cultures, which can be seen in both "The purpose of the subject [My translation]" as well as the goals of the subject (2000, p. 84-85). Whether this reflection and focus on other cultures manifests in concrete action from the students thus seem to be up to the discretion of the teacher to implement or not, based on what is deemed appropriate at the time. Of course, it is the intention for GY2000, and Lgy11 as well, to not provide explicit instructions of what content lessons are to include and instead let teachers interpret appropriate content based on readings of the curricula, as Linde (2012, p. 129) states. This provides what Hornberger (2002) call implementational space, and it is in this space that a tension lies for teachers of English as a second language, to implement the goals of the curriculum in meaningful, authentic ways. As Hult (2012, p. 250) has found, pre-service teachers struggled with implementing English in

ESL classrooms in meaningful and authentic ways, when English is not the language used for functional and meaningful communication between students.

There is a tension between the commonality and influence the English language has in Sweden according to the curricula, and the perceptions about English in everyday communication shared between students and pre-service teachers in Hult's study. One solution, according to one pre-service teacher could be to create a task that feels so authentic that language norms are suspended for the moment (Hult, 2012, p. 250). This tension of what language to use could carry over to the fourth dimension of critical literacy, in that it emphasizes social action that transforms the world, if the teacher chooses to focus work on transforming the students' immediate surrounding world here in Sweden. Given that Swedish still is the dominant language in Sweden, at least according to the pre-service teachers in Hult's study, it could be perceived as forced and inauthentic to have students try to enact social change in a language that is still considered to be second to Swedish, thus diminishing the value in the work that could be done. The solution instead could be to focus on issues in other cultures where English is a main tool for communication, thus enabling one of the goals in GY2000.

This tension, of letting English be the language of choice in meaningful and functional contexts while Swedish is considered the natural form of communication, is also apparent in Lgy11, making work done in the fourth dimension problematic, if the students are to be encouraged to create meaningful transformation of their surrounding world. Again, the conceit is that teachers are the ones responsible for interpreting what the curriculum states and putting it into practice inside their classrooms, which may or may not inspire calls to transformative social action that the students can enact on the world, thus enabling the fourth dimension of critical literacy. Of course, when the curriculum states that "[t]hese [all-round communicative] skills cover both reception [...] and production and interaction, which means

expressing oneself and interacting with others in speech and writing, as well as adapting their language to different situations, purposes and recipients” (Skolverket, 2011) there is the possibility to let social issues take center stage and let students express themselves as agents of change, creating agentic narratives. A view like this could enable the fourth dimension both by focusing on the language in play, looking at how language plays a role in shaping perceptions of people, as well as letting positive *praxis* be the driving force behind work. If properly motivated, social justice work could create meaningful contexts for the students to use English in as the main language of communication. To use the example from Vasquez (2014, p. 104) yet again, where students worked to change invitations to a barbecue to be more inclusive of vegetarians as well, it could be perceived as weird for students to similar work in English to try to enact change in an environment that has Swedish as a main language.

Overall, it is up to both teachers and students to create and foster meaningful contexts for the fourth dimension to flourish in, since both GY2000 and Lgy11 are interpretative in nature, only outlining goals and not explicit content, as Linde (2012, p. 129) has pointed out. There are spaces for social change to be turned into practice, in connection to the reflection on living conditions of people in English-speaking countries called for in GY2000, but this practice would have to function as an extension of this reflection, and not be the main goal of it. For Lgy11 the focus is on functional communication through language skills, which can be used to achieve the goal of understanding social issues and living conditions in other cultures, but, again, social change in practice would have to come as an extension of this work, since Lgy11 does not call for it explicitly as part of the education in the English subject. One challenge seems to lie in creating authentic meaningful contexts where English is the main vehicle for communication, since the perception the curricula has of English being so pervasive in Swedish culture is not shared by the pre-service teachers in

Hult's study, who think that students still use Swedish as the natural language for communication.

Now that all the dimensions of critical literacy have been brought forward in relation to their potential space in both curricula, the analysis will conclude by discussing how these spaces have developed from GY2000 to Lgy11 while also providing possible ways forward for research on critical literacy in different educational settings.

Conclusion: Discussing Spaces for Critical Literacy from GY2000 to Lgy11

When comparing the space for critical literacy from one curriculum to the other, the initial hypothesis of there being more space for critical literacy in Lgy11 was incorrect. Both curricula shared a focus on developing knowledge of functional English that students could use to navigate both Swedish society and a globalized world where English is the main language for communication. This follows Cabau's research (2009) of the rise of the English language in Swedish language education, as well research by Hult, where English is presented as a "transcultural" language in the curriculum, a language it is necessary to have knowledge of for the sake of internationalization, and it being part and parcel of daily Swedish life (2014, p. 239).

When a focus on other cultures was brought forward in both GY2000 and Lgy11, it existed together with the perspective of internationalization and functional communicative knowledge of the English language. When learning about other cultures, it was through the lens of how students best could interact with this culture with English as the language for communication. For instance, in GY2000 it was stated that English should be taught to foster international contacts and relationships for social and professional reasons (Skolverket, 2000, p. 84) and in Lgy11 it was stated that "[k]nowledge of English increases the individual's opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in global studies and working life." (Skolverket, 2012). Here, the focus was on how students could

interact with the globalized world, without necessarily encouraging or creating any change in it which is part of all the dimensions of critical literacy from Lewison et al. Where other cultures were the concern of both GY2000 and Lgy11, they focused on them in similar ways. In GY2000, the focus on other cultures stemmed from both an intention to develop understanding and tolerance for said cultures, as well as gaining knowledge of the English language with other cultures as a focal point. In Lgy11, the same could be said of the focus on knowledge of English and how this could be expanded with other cultures in English-speaking countries as focal points, as well as developing an understanding of similar/different ways of living.

Next, when it comes to spaces for the dimensions of critical literacy, Lgy11 held potential to make the power language has over shaping identities, perceptions and social possibilities the focus of lessons when it talked about gaining knowledge of language. For instance, knowledge of language could be taken to include knowledge that Janks (2010, p. 45) puts forward as innate to using language, namely the power of naming to create the world when choosing language. This space for critical literacy would have to come second to functional, communicative knowledge of English, since that seemed to be one of the main points of focus in Lgy11. However, it was where Lgy11 differentiates itself from GY2000, albeit in a slight manner, where critical literacy could provide an authentic, meaningful context for language learning, and that was when Lgy11 explicitly mentioned a focus on social issues in the last part of the overall curriculum for English (Skolverket, 2011). A focus on social issues is part and parcel of critical literacy education (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383), and can provide meaningful contexts for students to work in, as has been exemplified by Vasquez (2004), Janks (2010), and Abedina & Izadinia (2013), amongst others. This could work as solution to handle the tension pre-service teachers in Hult's study (2012) felt, where English did not function as a natural vehicle for communication compared to Swedish, by

providing a stage for students to use English in an impactful way that has them interact with their surroundings.

Of course, the main conceit is that nothing in the curricula calls for concrete, practical, action to be implemented in the same way as Friere (2014) intended education to focus on empowering the oppressed, instead outlining what the education should bring up and what students stand to learn. Teachers are meant to interpret and concretize the contents of the curricula, according to Linde (2012, p. 129), and it is in this interpretation, or implementational space as Hornberger (2002) put it, where the dimensions of critical literacy find their place, thus making it up to the discretion of each individual teacher to use the dimensions when practically implementing Lgy11. This analysis has highlighted parts of Lgy11 that seem to overlap in intention and meaning with dimensions of critical literacy and through this provided examples of an education with Lgy11 that can be made more critical and focused on language learning and awareness, as well as focusing on sociopolitical issues.

It is in this conceit of there not being an explicit place for critical literacy in the curricula, only implicit, where implications for practice are brought forward. Since critical literacy is not explicitly placed in the curricula, it would require teachers to first gather knowledge of this educational approach and then use this knowledge to interpret the contents of the curricula in a similar manner to this analysis to build lesson plans focusing on social justice issues and calls to action. With this analysis in mind, it becomes clear that a focus on functional knowledge of English is of primary concern in the curricula and the implication is thus that any educational work to do with critical literacy would have to come from a conscious decisions made by the teacher to take a more critical, social justice stance with their education. There are grounds for this decision to be made, as this analysis of the curricula has shown, but it would potentially have to come second to functional language knowledge.

With this conceit in mind, the limitations of this study also show themselves. Firstly, this study only analyzed the curricula focused on the subject of English, thus only highlighting a specific part of the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school. If the focus instead shifted to analyzing the curricula in a general sense, highlighting what direction Swedish education should take in general, a different space for critical literacy could possibly be found. This study is also limited in analyzing only textual data and theory, where interviews with professionals about the value of, and space for, a critical literacy education in Sweden could have given the results of this analysis more concrete and practical examples of classroom applications.

From these limitations and the results of the analysis, there are several directions future research could take. One could be going to practicing teachers and interview them, asking how they see the dimensions of critical literacy, and critical literacy as an educational approach, fitting into their daily practices. A case study could also be made; investigating what critical literacy education would look like in Sweden, provided that teachers are equipped with proper knowledge of the approach beforehand.

When it comes to curriculum research, it was interesting to find that developing *tolerance* was explicitly mentioned as one of the goals of the English subject in GY2000, while the same intention to develop tolerance was not mentioned in Lgy11, with the goal instead being to develop an ability to reflect on, and discuss, social issues and the living conditions of people in other English-speaking countries. Future research could therefore investigate how this change developed and what caused the slight shift in intention from GY2000 to Lgy11.

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