

Cultural Representations in English Textbooks

A Content Analysis of Viewpoints 1, 2, and 3



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Abstract

The aim of the present essay is to investigate English language textbooks suitable for English 5, 6 and 7 and the extent to which the content of them addresses cultural features of different contexts where English is used. The essay also aims to investigate what types of cultural representations are featured in the textbooks and if they differ in relation to what grade they are designed for. The background section of the essay includes descriptions of the concepts *culture* and *cultural competence*, two different models for identifying cultural components in texts, followed by a review of the literature where the previously mentioned models are used. Content analysis was used to examine cultural representations in the texts of *Viewpoints 1, 2, and 3*. Images and activities were excluded. The analysis is divided into two phases: one focusing on context, and one focusing on the content of the texts. The findings of the study suggest that the *Viewpoints* series' representations of cultures are skewed towards target cultures such as British and American culture, and that only selected aspects of culture are featured in the texts. Small "c" cultural features are usually embedded within texts, indicating that in order to discover and fully understand them, thorough examination of the texts is needed.

Keywords: teaching, source culture, target culture, international culture, big "C" culture, small "c" culture

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Introduction

The large space English occupies in today's globalized world has not escaped anyone (Balasubramanian, 2018). The massive spread of the English language has led to developments in different directions as it comes in contact with other languages. "The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago" (Crystal, 2003, p. 140). The native/non-native dichotomy that previously characterized English is no longer as strong as it used to be, which impacts users of English in different ways (Balasubramanian, 2018; Crystal, 2003). Native English speakers' loss of ownership of the language may lead to feelings of desertion, because it is their opinion that the language is theirs by historical right. However, there is no way in which anyone can try to influence and prevent the global spread of the language. As English continues to be considered the *lingua franca* of the world, it will continue to spread as the population of the world grows.

The results of a study carried out by Walker (2018) suggest that students of higher education still predominantly consider standardized English, English spoken by natives without any dialectal elements, as a more prestigious variety of English than any other variety of English. Acknowledging one variety of English as superior and more desirable than others results in marginalization and exclusion of those not speaking that particular variety of English.

Culture and English Teaching

The syllabi for English state that "students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used." (Skolverket, 2011b). The obsolete concept of "English-speaking countries" has been replaced with the more modern phrase "different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" in the 2011 version of the syllabi for

English in Swedish upper secondary school. The syllabi stress that language does not always coincide with national borders and that English is used as an international language of communication, also between people with other first languages other than English. In the CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference), the importance of acquiring intercultural and socio-cultural knowledge is emphasized (Skolverket, 2009). The CEFR also highlights the importance of obtaining the ability to communicate with individuals and groups of different backgrounds, as well as being able to understand others and their living conditions, social issues and cultural features. Intercultural knowledge and awareness allow individuals to “develop a richer and more complex personality, increase their language learning capabilities and become more open for new cultural experiences” (Skolverket, 2009, p. 45).

There is a general consensus that textbooks play an important role in the English language classroom, and therefore it is crucial that teachers thoroughly consider and analyze the content and quality of them before actively using them in the classroom (e.g., Abd Rashid & Engku Ibrahim, 2018; Toriki & Chalak, 2016; Yansyah, 2017). The usage of textbooks is perceived as a sufficient means for students to develop autonomy and experience the learning as structured and meaningful (Tevdovska, 2018; Wikman, 2004). Textbooks are also recognized as important sources through which students form their opinions, shape their identities and construct collective memories (Awyed-Bishara, 2015; Kazemi et al., 2017). The contents, topics and activities of foreign language textbooks function as representations of realities where the target language is used (Medina, 2008).

The integration of culture into textbooks is a widely accepted phenomenon as culture and language cannot exist without each other (Kirkgöz & Ağçam, 2011; Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015). If the culture of the people who speak the language that is being taught is disregarded, the language acquisition process would be incomplete. In the English language

classroom, textbooks are obliged to present context-appropriate content that truly reflects the target language and its surrounding culture, to ensure that the students receive an accurate representation of it on which they can base their opinions (Abd Rashid & Engku Ibrahim, 2018; Awayed-Bishara, 2015).

As previously mentioned, the curriculum and the syllabi for Swedish upper secondary school courses *English 5, 6, and 7* emphasize, among other things, the importance of knowledge of the surrounding world where English is used (Skolverket, 2011b). The aim of the present essay is to investigate English language textbooks suitable for *English 5, 6 and 7* and the extent to which the content of them addresses cultural features of different contexts where English is used. The essay also aims to investigate what types of cultural representations are featured in the textbooks and if they differ in relation to what grade they are designed for.

The research questions are:

- What types of cultural representations are presented in the textbooks?
- What similarities and differences are there between the cultural features represented in the textbooks for *English 5, 6, and 7* respectively?

Background

The theoretical background section is introduced with an explanation of the concepts of culture and cultural competence. It also provides a description of the theoretical models that will later be used as a basis for the analysis of the study. Finally, a summary of the latest previous research on the topic is presented.

Culture and Cultural Competence

Because the English language is no longer considered to be restricted to a single culture, the native-speaker culture, the concepts of *culture* and *cultural competence* have become incredibly complex in English language teaching (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015; Shin et al., 2011; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Yuen, 2011). The concepts no longer include English-speaking countries only, and there is no such thing as a ‘single ownership’ of the language anymore (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Yuen, 2011).

The concept of culture is extremely multifaceted, and therefore also somewhat difficult to explain. In the syllabi for English in Swedish upper secondary school, cultural features are defined as not only the literature, art, and architecture of a community, but also all the different expressions of social living patterns (Skolverket, 2011a). These include the way people act, interact, and talk in everyday contexts, the attitudes of groups and individuals, values and expectations, as well as what people in different groups take for granted and perceive as acceptable or normal behavior. According to the results of a study by Chavez (2002), it is a common perception that culture only consists of food, clothes and customs of a particular group of people or society. When we are asked to describe a culture we often mention things that we can physically look at. What is often forgotten are the things that we cannot physically look at, things that are abstract and less perceivable. Culture can, for example, also function as the framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that we use to interpret other people’s actions, speech, and ways of thinking (Cortazzi, 1999). It includes norms for how and what we think, believe, say and do. Culture is individually constructed, subjective, and everchanging in relation to the contexts it exists in.

“Cultural competence is about continually developing and refining a skill set and worldview that are useful across different situations, not about acquiring discrete bits of

knowledge that are results of overgeneralization” (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015, p. 320). Textbooks including appropriate cultural content promote cultural competence, which is a central element of English language learning in Sweden (Abd Rashid & Engku Ibrahim, 2018; Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Skolverket, 2011b; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Wikman, 2004). By acquiring cultural competence, the students are expected to develop a sense of global citizenship to be able to relate their own culture to others, and to compare and contrast them (Siddiqie, 2011). In order to reflect upon similarities and differences between cultures, recognizing and understanding one’s own culture and how it influences one’s values and interactions is equally as important as understanding other cultures (Povenmire-Kirk et al., 2015). Because textbooks tend to play such an important role in the English language classroom, it is crucial that the cultural content included in them truly represent the targeted cultures. If the cultural content is artificial, distorted or misrepresentative, the students will not be able to base their opinions on facts, which can result in false and stereotypical representations of the represented cultures.

Source, Target, and International Culture Materials

One way to gain a deeper understanding of different types of culture is by grouping them according to origin. McKay (2000) proposes three types of cultural teaching materials: source culture materials, target culture materials, and international target culture materials. Source culture materials includes content related to the learners’ native culture. Target culture materials involves content related to cultures where the target language is used as a native language, e.g., British or American culture. The third type of cultural teaching material, the international culture material, includes content that represents any varieties of cultures where English is used, in any English- or non-English-speaking countries around the world.

Source culture materials. Source culture materials can be described as textbook content that contains the learners' own culture (Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; McKay, 2000). In a Swedish setting, a source culture material could be an English text about the Midsummer celebration, for example. The main goal of using source culture materials is to learn more about one's own culture while practicing communicative skills and improving one's English vocabulary at the same time. This type of materials is mostly used at beginner levels of English and should not be present to a larger extent in textbooks suitable for upper secondary school.

Target culture materials. Target culture materials can be described as textbook content that contains culture of a country where English is spoken as a first language by the majority of the population (Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Paige et al., 2000; McKay, 2000). Target culture materials could include texts about British or American culture, for example. It is an old tradition to use materials of English-speaking cultures only and the concept of target culture might be controversial to some, but because target culture is still given an extensive coverage in textbooks it will be used as a unit of analysis in this essay. Because English has become a de-nationalized language and the educational goal is to enable learners to communicate internationally, target culture materials shouldn't be favored over international culture materials (Paige et al., 2000). The extensive coverage of target culture in textbooks will be further discussed in the previous research-section below.

International culture materials. International culture materials can be described as textbook content that contains culture of any country or society where English is used, from anywhere in the world. It does not have to be nationally bound and can include any group of people using English as a means of communication. International culture materials are favorable to use in educational settings due to the globalization and internationalization that characterizes the 21st century. English is frequently used globally today by speakers who do

not speak it as a first language to communicate with people all over the world, and this should also be reflected in the textbooks teachers choose to use (McKay 2000; Paige et al., 2000).

Model for Identifying Cultural Components

Another way to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of culture, is to analyze the different components of culture in detail. Paige et al. (2000) originally proposed a model for identifying cultural-specific components which was later used by e.g., Lee (2009), Dehbozorgi et al. (2014) and Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) to examine cultural content in English textbooks. The model includes two opposing categories: Big “C” culture and small “c” culture. Big “C” culture includes references to easily-observed phenomena, such as politics, history, music and art. Small “c” culture refers to abstract and less visible aspects of cultures, such as values, customs, lifestyles and beliefs.

Big “C” culture. Big “C” Culture can be explained as the *products*, achievements and artifacts of a society or a particular group of people (Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Paige et al., 2000). It includes historical events, geographical locations, architectural trends, music and art. It also includes a society’s economical approaches, industries, educational systems and political governments. Big “C” culture is concrete, easily accessible and often includes the first things you learn about a culture because the aspects are easily remembered (Lee, 2009).

Small “c” culture. Small “c” culture can be explained as the *practices*, lifestyles and routine aspects of a society or a particular group of people (Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Paige et al., 2000). It includes beliefs, values, ideas and attitudes, but also food preferences, clothes, hobbies, customs and holidays. These aspects are usually less visible and refers to a deeper sense of culture which makes them more difficult to gain information about and truly understand. These aspects are especially important to the concept of culture because they

determine the norms of behavior, thinking, and language use. Failing to understand these aspects can potentially lead to pragmatic failure, particularly in interactions with people from other cultures.

Literature Review

The literature review section focuses on previous research about source, target and international culture, as well as big “C” culture and small “c” culture in English textbooks.

Source, target and international culture in textbooks. Several studies examining cultural content in English textbooks have been administered over the last couple of years, with different focal points and results (e.g., Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Kazemi et al., 2017; Medina, 2008; Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015). The studies conclude that cultural representations are present in the investigated textbooks, but to different extents. There is also a noticeable variation in what types of cultural content are represented in the textbooks. The results of some textbook studies have indicated that the balance between source culture, target culture and international culture is quantitatively equal in the textbooks, while others have identified the opposite (e.g., Siddiqie, 2011 and Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015).

The results of studies by Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), Shin (2011) and Yansyah (2017) indicate that target cultures are highlighted over other types of culture in English textbooks. The amount of texts focusing on British and American culture is significantly larger than texts focusing on any other culture. Some textbook studies have found that the amount of target culture materials and international culture materials is equal, while others have found that references to international culture is missing completely (Silvia, 2015; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015). Conversely, the results of a study by Habib (2014) implicated that the analyzed textbooks primarily focused on source culture materials. The inconsistent results could be interpreted as a reflection of the difficulties involved in the shift of focus from

English native-speaker culture to international English culture. A neglect of some parts of the cultures where English is used encourages a fragmented view of language, continuing to hinder the development of an intercultural understanding.

Big “C” culture and small “c” culture in textbooks. What the results of the studies also seem to have in common, is the notion of lack of depth when it comes to the textbooks’ representations of culture (e.g., Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Lee, 2009; Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015). According to the results of the studies, the content of the textbooks tends to predominately include general aspects of culture: big “C” culture. The four most frequently appearing big “C” culture-themes in textbooks are history, literature, arts and politics. The results of the studies also indicate that the content of the textbooks tend to be fragmented and stereotypical, typically adopting a “tourist’s perspective” instead of a local’s perspective (Yuen, 2011, p. 463).

Subjective and less visible aspects of culture, small “c” culture, such as customs, values, lifestyles and hobbies, receive less coverage in the analyzed textbooks (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015; Yuen, 2011). According to the studies, the only small “c” culture-theme that is commonly included in the textbooks is “customs”. The subjective and less visible aspects of culture are essential for understanding a society, because they provide insights that cannot be acquired by the study of general, easily-observable aspects alone. The concept of cultural competence cannot be implemented and used if some cultural aspects are neglected (Paige, 2000).

Method

The present study was designed to investigate English language textbooks for the Swedish upper secondary school courses *English 5, 6 and 7* and the extent to which the

content of them addressed cultural features of different contexts where English is used. To do so, a content analysis of carefully selected textbooks was performed in two phases. Firstly, the process of selecting the textbooks for the study will be described and rationalized. Secondly, the procedure for analysis will be presented as well as the coding scheme that was used for the study. Finally, a short discussion of the study's limitations will be provided.

Selection of Textbooks

To obtain the textbook titles, a survey was distributed to teachers in a closed Facebook group for English teachers in Sweden with over 1800 members. It aimed at investigating which textbooks are used the most in upper secondary schools today. In total, 96 responses were recorded, and the five most popular titles and the number of votes for them are shown in the table below. The survey responses are not to be understood as truly representational of all English teachers in Sweden's overall opinion but merely as a tool to select textbooks for the present study. As seen in Table 1, the textbook series *Viewpoints* was the most popular title according to the responses in the survey. The *Viewpoints* series is created by Linda Gustavsson and Uno Wivast. Based on these results, *Viewpoints 1, 2 and 3* were chosen as the objects of analysis for this study.

Textbook title	Number of votes
Viewpoints 1, 2, 3	26
EF Class (Digital)	18
Echo 5, 6, 7	18
Blueprint A, B, C	10
Solid Gold 1, 2, 3	8

Table 1: Results of survey

The *Viewpoints* series include student books, student web guides and teacher web guides. There are also digital versions of every course book available. The textbooks are

divided into chapters with different themes, which in turn are divided into different sections with different texts and activities related to the overall theme of the chapter. In the preface of each book, it is stated that the textbooks include content from different parts of the world and that the students using them will have the opportunity to develop their ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different parts of the world.

Procedure for Analysis

A content analysis was performed through a close reading and rereading of the chosen textbooks. Content analysis is “the analysis of manifest or latent content of a body of communicated material through classification, tabulation and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect” (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 1). It is a tool that makes replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). To be able to procedurally produce inferences, units of analysis must be determined and used as the basis for the analysis. The units function as independent, “countable” (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 102), elements of a text, which enables the analyst to categorize content into distinguishable themes. The units of analysis for this study will be further described and discussed in the section below.

Contextual analyses. The units of analysis for the essay were the text passages of the textbooks’ different sections. Images and activities that were associated with the texts were not examined. The units were initially analyzed schematically according to the categories proposed by McKay (2000): source culture materials, target culture materials, and international culture materials. To determine the units’ category, traces of the texts’ country of origin were searched for in the texts. The texts’ country of origin was either explicitly mentioned in the texts, in the titles of the texts, or was determined on the basis of the

author(s) country of origin. The coding schemes that were used are presented in Table 2, 3 and 4 below.

	Sweden
Viewpoints 1	
Viewpoints 2	
Viewpoints 3	

Table 2: Coding table for source culture analysis

	Target culture				
Viewpoints 1					
Viewpoints 2					
Viewpoints 3					

Table 3: Coding table for target culture analysis

	Int. culture						
Viewpoints 1							
Viewpoints 2							
Viewpoints 3							

Table 4: Coding table for international culture analysis

Subsequently in the same manner, the units of analysis were categorized into the two categories initially proposed by Paige (2000) and then later used by e.g., Lee (2009), Dehbozorgi et al. (2014) and Rodríguez & Espinar (2015): big “C” Culture and small “c” culture. To assist the analysis process, the sub-categories *politics*, *economy/business/industry*, *history*, *geography*, *literature/art/film*, *education* and *music* were used in the big “C” Culture-category for clarification. For the small “c” culture category, the sub-categories *food*, *holiday/celebrations*, *lifestyle*, *customs/behavior*, *values/beliefs/attitudes*,

hobbies/leisure and *clothes* were used. The operational definitions of the sub-categories of Big “C” Culture and small “c” culture can be found in the attached Appendix. The coding scheme that was used is presented in Table 5 below.

Unit:		Source culture Swedish culture	Target culture e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	International culture e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.	TOTAL	
Big “C” Culture	Politics					
	Economy, business, industry					
	History					
	Geography					
	Literature, art, film					
	Education					
	Music					
Small “c” culture	Food					
	Holiday, celebrations					
	Lifestyle					
	Customs, behavior					
	Values, beliefs, attitudes					
	Hobbies, leisure					
	Clothes					
<i>Non-cultural content</i>						
TOTAL						

Table 5: Coding scheme (adopted from Xiao, 2010, p. 36)

Content analyses. In the second phase of the analysis, the coding scheme presented in Table 3 was used once more in order to distinguish big “C” and small “c” cultural features within the texts. The units of analysis for this part of the analysis were the sentences of the texts in the textbooks. Each sentence was analyzed independently and was provided a descriptive code summarizing its main content (Saldaña, 2015). The codes were then

categorized according to coding scheme in Table 5. Sentences not including any cultural content were disregarded.

The primary concern for the study was the frequency of cultural representations in the texts, to examine the breadth of cultures presented in the textbooks. Although the cultural representations' level of explicitness differed in the texts, they were quantified equally in this study. An explicit reference to a historical event compared to an implicit reference to a culturally specific attitude differ in width but were both acknowledged as individual representations in the terms of breadth. The width of the representations was beyond the scope of the present study and was not considered in the analysis.

Results

This section presents the results of the analysis' two phases. The procedures of the phases are described in the order they were performed in combination with their associated tables presented in the previous section. To begin with, an analysis of the textbooks is performed to determine the cultural origins of the texts. Secondly, the texts are analyzed in their entirety to determine what their overall topic is. Finally, the sentences of the texts are analyzed individually to search for cultural representations within the sentences of the texts as well.

Contextual analyses

Table 6 below presents the data collected from the initial analyses of the textbooks. The columns represent the amount of target and international cultural texts found in the textbooks. The diagram of source culture materials was excluded from the analysis because no such texts were found.

	UK	USA	Australia	Canada	Jamaica
Viewpoints 1	14	3	1	-	-
Viewpoints 2	9	5	3	-	1
Viewpoints 3	6	5	1	1	-

	India	Saudi Arabia	Sierra Leone	West Africa	Pakistan	Colombia
Viewpoints 1	-	-	-	1	1	1
Viewpoints 2	1	1	1	-	-	-
Viewpoints 3	1	-	-	1	-	-

Table 6: Analysis of source, target and international cultures

Apparent in the table above is that texts of target culture origin, especially British origin, appear to be overrepresented in all the analyzed textbooks. These findings support the assumptions made by Dehbozorgi et al., (2014), Shin (2011) and Yansyah (2017) whom also found that target cultures, especially British and American culture, were overrepresented in the English language textbooks they analyzed. The results of the study also appear to be in line with Walker (2018), whose study indicated that people still tend to predominantly consider English spoken by natives as a more prestigious and preferred variety of English.

In an e-mail-based interview with the authors of the textbooks, the authors explained that an important factor in the process of choosing the texts for the books was that they included content from an “as wide variation of *English-speaking countries* as possible”. The expression “English-speaking countries” has not been used in policy documents since the new syllabi for upper secondary school English were published in 2011. However, although the expression is considered outdated, the statement can function as an explanation for the overrepresentation of target culture materials in the analyzed textbooks.

In the interview, the authors also stressed the fact that they had “texts from American, British, Pakistani, South American, African, Indian, Australian, Saudi, Indian and Canadian culture” and that their books “reflect many types of cultures and have a broad cultural content”. As shown in Table 6, the texts of international origin are very few and restricted to a small selection of cultures. However, although the texts of international origin are few, they do represent a wide variety of cultures from all over the world. There are four texts of Asian origin, one of South American origin and three of African origin. As it appears, the results of the study are not in line with neither Silvia (2015), whose study indicated that the amount of target culture materials and international culture materials is equal in the textbooks, nor Tajeddin & Teimournezhad (2015), who concluded that the textbooks they analyzed lacked references to international culture completely.

Despite the coverage of a wide variety of cultures in the international culture category, the results should be observed with caution. “West Africa” is evidently not a country, but there were no specific references to singular countries in the texts. What also should be noted, is that English is an official language in both India, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan. Therefore, the results in this category can be partially misleading. What can be concluded though, is that the lack of international culture materials in the textbooks is extensive.

The national syllabi for English emphasize the importance of “knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used” (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 1), and it is written in the textbooks that they “include content from different parts of the world and that the students using them will have the opportunity to develop their ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different parts of the world”, The results of the analysis imply the opposite. Because the concept of culture in English language teaching no longer include English-speaking countries only, there is no reason to skew the content of textbooks towards

target cultures anymore (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015; Yuen, 2011). It will be extremely difficult for the students to adopt a sense of global citizenship if some cultures of the world are excluded from the teaching materials used in the classroom (Siddiqie, 2011).

Table 7, 8 and 9 below present the rest of the data collected from the context analyses of the textbooks during the first phase of the analysis. Table 10 summarizes the results of all three analyses. The horizontal columns present the big “C” and the small “c” culture categories, divided into their accompanying sub-categories. The vertical columns represent the source, target and international culture categories. The total amount of representations in each category is presented at the end of the columns.

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 1		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase one		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	-	-	-	6
	Economy, business, industry	-	-	-	-	
	History	-	1	-	1	
	Geography	-	-	-	-	
	Literature, art, film	-	5	-	5	
	Education	-	-	-	-	
	Music	-	-	-	-	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	-	-	-	11
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	3	2	5	
	Customs, behavior	-	1	1	2	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	4	-	4	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	-	-	-	
	Clothes	-	-	-	-	
<i>Non-cultural content</i>		-	4	-	4	
TOTAL		-	18	3		

Table 7: Contextual analysis, Viewpoints 1

As seen in Table 7, most of the texts in *Viewpoints 1* are of target culture origin, which was discussed more in detail in the previous section. The amount of texts including content related to small “c” culture seems to be greater than the amount of texts including content related to big “C” culture. The most common theme in the big “C” category appears to be *literature/art/film*. In the small “c” category, *lifestyle* and *values/beliefs/attitudes* are highlighted more than other small “c” cultural aspects. According to e.g., Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), Lee (2009) and Rodríguez & Espinar (2015), two of the four most frequently appearing big “C” culture themes were *literature* and *arts*, which is indicated in the results of this part of the present study as well. However, one surprising finding is that there appears to be a larger amount of texts related to small “c” culture in this textbook, which is not in line with the results of the studies by Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) and Yuen (2011).

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 2		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase one		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	-	-	-	11
	Economy, business, industry	-	-	-	-	
	History	-	3	1	4	
	Geography	-	-	-	-	
	Literature, art, film	-	6	-	6	
	Education	-	-	-	-	
	Music	-	1	-	1	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	-	-	-	8
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	2	-	2	
	Customs, behavior	-	2	1	3	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	1	1	2	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	1	-	1	
	Clothes	-	-	-	-	

<i>Non-cultural content</i>	-	2	-	2	
TOTAL	-	17	4		

Table 8: Contextual analysis, Viewpoints 2

In *Viewpoints 2*, as it appears in Table 8, it was also found that texts of target culture origin were significantly overrepresented in comparison to texts of source and international culture origin. However, the texts in *Viewpoints 2* seem to a larger extent be related to big “C” culture instead of small “c” culture as in *Viewpoints 1*. In the small “c” culture category, *customs/behavior* is the most represented sub-category. These results support the findings in the studies by Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) and Yuen (2011). The results of the present study also appear to confirm their notion that *customs/behavior* was the most commonly included small “c” culture-theme in the textbooks.

As well as in *Viewpoints 1*, the most covered theme in the big “C” culture category appears to be *literature/art/film*. However, this result should be viewed with caution. *Viewpoints 2* had a chapter called “Classics” which included five classical texts, all of whom were positioned in the *literature/art/film* category in this study. It is interesting to note though, that four out of the five “classical” texts chosen for the chapter were written by British authors.

History is another common big “C” culture theme in *Viewpoints 2*, which according to e.g., Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), Lee (2009) and Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) is also one of the four most frequently appearing big “C” culture themes in textbooks.

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 3		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase one		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big	Politics	-	1	-	1	

“C” Culture	Economy, business, industry	-	1	1	2	10
	History	-	-	-	-	
	Geography	-	-	-	-	
	Literature, art, film	-	6	1	7	
	Education	-	-	-	-	
	Music	-	-	-	-	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	-	-	-	2
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	1	-	1	
	Customs, behavior	-	1	-	1	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	-	-	-	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	-	-	-	
	Clothes	-	-	-	-	
<i>Non-cultural content</i>		-	3	-	3	
TOTAL		-	13	2		

Table 9: Contextual analysis, Viewpoints 3

The overrepresentation of target culture materials becomes even more prominent in the analysis of *Viewpoints 3*, as seen in Table 9 above. Almost 90 percent of the texts are of target culture origin. Looking at the table, it is also apparent that big “C” culture is overrepresented in the textbook. In the big “C” category, *literature/art/film* receives by far the most coverage once again. Unlike *Viewpoints 2*, *Viewpoints 3* does not have a chapter called “Classics”. However, almost all its *literature/art/film*-texts are still written by authors from target cultures.

The core content of English 7 differs from that of English 5 and 6 (Skolverket, 2011b). In the core content for English 5 and 6, it is stated that the courses should cover: “*Living conditions, attitudes, values, traditions*, social issues as well as cultural, historical, political

and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used“, whereas in the core content for English 7, it is stated that the course should cover: “*Societal issues*, cultural, historical, political and social conditions, and also *ethical and existential issues* in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used”. The shift from “social issues” to “societal issues” and the addition of “ethical and existential issues” might explain the choice of including texts with the overall topic *economy/business/industry* in *Viewpoints 3*, as they mainly covered poor working conditions of different kinds.

Units: VIEWPOINTS 1, 2, 3		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase one		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	1	-	1	27
	Economy, business, industry	-	1	1	2	
	History	-	4	1	5	
	Geography	-	-	-	-	
	Literature, art, film	-	17	1	18	
	Education	-	-	-	-	
	Music	-	1	-	1	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	-	-	-	21
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	6	2	8	
	Customs, behavior	-	4	2	6	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	5	1	6	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	1	-	1	
	Clothes	-	-	-	-	
Non-cultural content		-	9	-	9	
TOTAL		-	48	9		

Table 10: Contextual analysis, total

Apparent in Table 10 above is the overrepresentation of the big “C” culture-category *literature/art/film*. It is also evident that out of the 18 texts whose overall topic was *literature/art/film*, only one was of international origin. The unequal division between literary works from target cultures and international cultures is problematic, because it implies that the target culture texts are of greater value to read than international texts. If students are expected to understand and be aware of international cultures and their living conditions, social issues and cultural features, they cannot be excluded from the teaching materials.

Looking at Table 10, the division between big “C” culture texts and small “c” culture texts appears to be relatively equal. Contradicting the individual analyses of the textbooks, the summary of the results of the analyses does not fully support the findings of Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), Lee (2009), Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) and Yuen (2011). Although the summary in Table 10 indicates that big “C” culture is the most frequently adopted theme of the texts, it also includes a noticeable skewedness towards one particular sub-category: *literature/art/film*. The variation within the most adopted themes in the small “c” category is more balanced and could therefore be regarded a greater representation of the category as a whole.

One surprising finding is that many of the texts’ overall topic is the small “c” category *lifestyle*. Knowledge of the way people act, interact, and talk in everyday contexts is crucial to fully understand a culture. Because it is a common perception that culture only consists of food, clothes and customs, the incorporation of texts related to people’s everyday lifestyles are important to broaden the students’ view of what culture truly consists of (Chavez, 2002).

Content Analyses

In the second phase of the analysis, big “C” and small “c” cultural features within the texts were categorized by analyzing each sentence of the texts independently, without regards

to their surrounding textual context. Table 11, 12 and 13 below present the data collected from the content analyses of the textbooks during the second phase of the analysis. Table 14 summarizes the results of all three analyses. The columns are presented in the same manner as in the previous section.

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 1		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase two		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	3	-	3	57
	Economy, business, industry	-	4	-	4	
	History	-	14	8	22	
	Geography	-	2	1	3	
	Literature, art, film	-	20	4	24	
	Education	-	1	-	1	
	Music	-	-	-	-	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	2	-	2	155
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	15	1	16	
	Customs, behavior	-	29	8	37	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	62	7	69	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	2	-	2	
	Clothes	-	26	3	29	
TOTAL		-	180	32		

Table 11: Analysis of content, Viewpoints 1

The results of the analysis of *Viewpoints 1* in the second phase are in some ways similar to those of the first phase. The number of sentences including content related to small “c” culture is larger than the number of sentences including content related to big “C” culture. However, in the big “C” category, the amount of cultural representations of *history* appears to

be greater. There also appears to be significantly more representations of the small “c” categories *values/beliefs/attitudes*, *customs/behavior*, and *clothes*.

Surprisingly, the largest category in the second analysis of *Viewpoints I* appears to be *values/beliefs/attitudes*. Below are three examples of sentences from three different chapters whom all included a large number of sentences related to the *values/beliefs/attitudes* category.

I don't think there's some kind of huge barrier between black people and Asian – I just want to know if you think you're doing the right thing... (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 74).

According to Dawkins, fairy stories are harmful because they instill a false belief in the supernatural. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 97).

I care about all four but even if people don't care about their own health they might care about money, if they don't care about people and the environment then they care about money. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 138).

It is difficult to write texts solely on the topic of a specific value, belief or attitude. Values, beliefs, and attitudes are all implicit aspects of culture that emerge in the interaction with others. In that sense, the results above are not surprising. The utterances in the examples above are all results of interactions embedded in the texts. Because of their implicit nature it can be difficult to acknowledge them as culture-specific aspects without carefully analyzing the texts in detail, which due to different reasons is not always possible to do. As a teacher, it is important to acknowledge these aspects of culture within texts to be able to mediate them to the students appropriately. Because textbooks are recognized as important sources through

which students form their opinions and shape their identities, it is crucial that all aspects of the cultures included in the textbooks are emphasized equally as much (Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Kazemi et al., 2017).

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 2		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase two		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	2	1	3	132
	Economy, business, industry	-	-	-	-	
	History	-	69	16	85	
	Geography	-	9	-	9	
	Literature, art, film	-	23	-	23	
	Education	-	5	1	6	
	Music	-	6	-	6	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	10	2	12	182
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	10	4	14	
	Customs, behavior	-	48	31	79	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	35	16	51	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	9	-	9	
	Clothes	-	17	-	17	
TOTAL		-	233	81		

Table 12: Analysis of content, Viewpoints 2

The results of the analysis of *Viewpoints 2* in phase two do not correspond with the results of the analysis in phase one. On sentence level, the texts appear to contain more references to small “c” culture than it did earlier. In correlation with the second phase analysis of *Viewpoints 1*, the sentences in *Viewpoints 2* also seem to include cultural representations related to *customs/behavior* and *values/beliefs/attitudes* to a larger extent than

what was shown in the results of the first phase analysis. There also appears to be significantly more references to big “C” culture *history* in the textbooks’ sentences.

Looking at the results of the phase one analysis of *Viewpoints 1* and *Viewpoints 2* in Table 7 and 8, it is not surprising that the amount of references to *history* on sentence level is larger in *Viewpoints 2*. If more texts’ overall topic is *history*, it is expected that more sentences in the text are related to *history* as well. Below are two extracts from the textbooks that were categorized as *history* sentences:

Ada, Countess of Lovelace, was born Ada Byron on 10 December 1815, the daughter of the poet Lord Byron and his wife Annabella (nee Milbanke), and died after a long and painful illness in 1852. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2018, p. 76).

Some say it is political and refers to the rocky relationship between the USA and Cuba in the early sixties. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2018, p. 137).

Cultural representations related to *customs/behavior* were found in almost all texts in the textbook, not only in those whose overall topic was categorized as *customs/behavior* in the first phase of the analysis. These results are in line with the studies by Rodríguez & Espinar (2015) and Yuen (2011), who both concluded that the most commonly included small “c” culture-theme in the textbooks they analyzed was *customs/behavior*. Customs and behavior are important aspects of a culture, as they are two of the most visible small “c” culture aspects. Below are two extracts from *Viewpoints 2* that were categorized as *customs/behavior* sentences:

Even in the most progressive families, daughters are still entitled to far lesser than sons, from playtime and education to choosing a life partner and inheriting property. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2018, p. 24).

It was the occasion of the *shoufa*, that one lawful “viewing” of the potential bride according to Islamic law. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2018, p. 51).

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 3		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase one		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	4	-	4	132
	Economy, business, industry	-	30	24	54	
	History	-	33	1	34	
	Geography	-	3	-	3	
	Literature, art, film	-	22	3	25	
	Education	-	3	-	3	
	Music	-	9	-	9	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	22	3	25	139
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	-	5	5	
	Customs, behavior	-	40	10	50	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	39	3	42	
	Hobbies, leisure	-	3	-	3	
	Clothes	-	13	1	14	
TOTAL		-	221	50		

Table 13: Analysis of content, Viewpoints 3

Resembling the results of the second analysis of *Viewpoints 2*, the results of the analysis of *Viewpoints 3* do not correspond with the analysis in the first phase of the study. There appears to be a balance between the representations of small “c” culture and big “C”

culture in the texts. The most covered small “c” culture categories are *customs/behavior* and *values/beliefs/attitudes*, which correlates with the other second phase analyses. However, the big “C” category *economy/business/industry* have been given a significantly larger amount of coverage in this textbook compared to the others. This result correlates with the first phase analysis of *Viewpoints 3*. Below are two extracts from *Viewpoints 3* that were categorized as *economy/business/industry* sentences:

Today, Lubbock, Texas, is indeed the “cottonest city in the world,” and the surrounding farmland is the leading birthplace of the world’s T-shirts. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2014, p. 63).

Figured compiled by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture show that 64 per cent of plantation workers are less than 14 years old. (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2014, p. 138).

Unit: VIEWPOINTS 1, 2, 3		Source culture	Target culture	International culture	TOTAL	
Phase two		Swedish culture	e.g. British culture, American culture, etc.	e.g. Indian culture, German culture, etc.		
Big “C” Culture	Politics	-	9	1	10	321
	Economy, business, industry	-	34	24	58	
	History	-	116	25	141	
	Geography	-	14	1	15	
	Literature, art, film	-	65	7	72	
	Education	-	9	1	10	
	Music	-	15	-	15	
Small “c” culture	Food	-	34	5	39	476
	Holiday, celebrations	-	-	-	-	
	Lifestyle	-	25	10	35	
	Customs, behavior	-	117	49	166	
	Values, beliefs, attitudes	-	136	26	162	

	Hobbies, leisure	-	14	-	14
	Clothes	-	56	4	60
	TOTAL	-	634	163	

Table 14: Analysis of content, total

As it appears in Table 14 above, the three most covered categories in *Viewpoints 1, 2* and *3* on sentence level are big “C” culture *history*, small “c” culture *customs/behavior*, and small “c” culture *values/beliefs/attitudes*. The small “c” category *holiday/celebrations* is fully omitted in all three of the textbooks. Although observed to a small extent in some target culture texts, big “C” category *music* and small “c” category *hobbies/leisure* is completely absent in all international culture texts. As it is, according to Chavez (2002), a common perception that culture only consists of food, clothes and customs, it is surprising that the representations of *food* and *clothes* in the analyzed textbooks are so few in comparison to the three most covered categories: *customs/behavior*, *values/beliefs/attitudes* and *history*.

The results of this study indicate that small “c” cultural aspects are more frequent in the textbooks, which is not in line with the studies by e.g., Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), Lee (2009), and Rodríguez & Espinar (2015). However, these results should be viewed with caution. Many of the small “c” cultural aspects are hidden aspects of culture, i.e. difficult to find in texts without thoroughly examining them. Because this study did include a very thorough analysis, it might solely be the explanation for the larger amount of small “c” cultural aspects found. A different reader, and/or a less experienced reader, might not have interpreted the sentences in the same way. Content analysis is based on subjective interpretation and evaluation, which calls for variations in results depending on who the analyst is and what background he or she has.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate English language textbooks suitable for the Swedish upper secondary school courses *English 5, 6 and 7* and the extent to which the content of them addressed cultural features of different contexts where English is used. The essay also aimed at examining what types of cultural representations are featured in the textbooks and if they differ in relation to what grade they are designed for. During the analysis of the textbooks it became apparent that *Viewpoints 1, 2 and 3* predominately include content related to target cultures of English. The amounts of texts focusing on British and American culture is significantly larger than texts focusing on any other culture. Based on these findings, it can be implied that in the *Viewpoints* series, target cultures are viewed as more central to the language than other cultures. These findings correlate with the results of the study administered by Walker (2018), who found that the participants predominately considered English spoken by natives as a more prestigious variety of English than any other variety of English. Given the position of English as an international language, and because the contents and topics of English language textbooks function as representations of realities where English is used (Medina, 2008), it is surprising to conclude that the authors of the *Viewpoints* series have chosen to exclude the majority of cultures where English is used as something other than a native language. English textbooks are obliged to present context-appropriate content that truly reflects the English language and its surrounding culture, to ensure that the students receive an accurate representation of it on which they can base their opinions (Abd Rashid & Engku Ibrahim, 2018; Awayed-Bishara, 2015). If some English cultures are omitted, it is difficult to achieve this.

The contextual analyses of the textbooks indicate that the most common overall topic of the analyzed texts is *literature/art/film*. Although literature, art and film can be used to illustrate central aspects of the English language, there is no rationale for excluding other

aspects of the language in favor of it. However, the large skewedness towards the *literature/art/film* category was not as prominent in the results of the analyses of content. Surprisingly, the small “c” categories *customs/behavior* and *values/beliefs/attitudes* received the most coverage on sentence level. The prominent presence of these small “c” categories on sentence level stresses the importance for teachers to thoroughly examine texts that are to be used in the classroom to ensure that the students are aware of what cultural information they are presented with.

Because textbooks play an important role in many English language classrooms, it is crucial that teachers thoroughly consider and analyze the content of them before presenting them to the students (e.g., Abd Rashid & Engku Ibrahim, 2018; Yansyah, 2017). To use the *Viewpoints* series, one must be aware of the skewedness towards target cultures it includes. The skewedness towards target culture materials does not reflect the syllabi for English in Swedish upper secondary school, where the obsolete concept of “English-speaking countries” is not present anymore. A neglect and omission of some English cultures encourages a fragmented view of language, continuing to hinder the development of an intercultural understanding.

Due to the subjective nature of conducting research using a content analysis method, there are limitations to this study. It is also not possible to conclude anything about other textbooks’ content because only one series of textbooks were analyzed. For further research it would be valuable and interesting to analyze other textbooks suitable for *English 5, 6 and 7*, to see if the results are in line with those of this study. It would also be interesting to investigate teachers’ views on the tendency to focus on target cultures in teaching materials, and how they manage this in their teaching to ensure that the syllabi are followed.

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Appendix

Big "C" sub-category	Definition	Examples
Politics	The activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society	Legal provision
		Political policies
		Acts of government
		Activities of leaders of countries
		International conference and affairs on political issues
Economy, business	<p>1). The relationship between production, trade, and the supply of money in a particular country or region</p> <p>2). The activity of making, buying, selling or supplying goods or services for money</p>	Introduction of enterprises
		Activities of enterprises
		Business in a country
		Statistical data of business
		International economic issues
History	<p>1). All the events that happened in the past.</p> <p>2). The past events concerned in the development of a particular place, subject etc.</p>	Turning points in human history
		Important persons of the past
		Important events to human life
		Agricultural history of humans
Geography	<p>1). The scientific study of the earth's surface, physical features, divisions, products, population etc.</p> <p>2). A country, area, or region</p>	Geographical descriptions of places
		Agriculture and environments
		Geographical sites and landmarks
		Specific areas or regions
Literature, art, films	<p>1). Pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems</p> <p>2). the use of the imagination to express ideas or feelings, particularly in painting, drawing or sculpture</p> <p>3). a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story, shown on television or at the cinema/movie theater</p>	Important literary works
		Poems, novels, drama
		Famous texts by famous authors
		Art, famous paintings
		Famous painters and actors
		References to parts of movies
Education	A process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills	Organization of education systems
		Curriculum, courses, subjects
		Education structures
		Educational institutions
Music	Sounds that are arranged in a way that is pleasant or exciting to listen to. People sing music or play it on instruments	Types of modern music
		Traditional or classic music
		Music appreciation
		Great and famous musical works

Note: all the definitions are based on the Oxford Learner's Dictionary and the work of Xiao (2010), p. 39.

Small "c" sub-category	Definition	Examples
Food	1). Things that people or animals eat 2). A particular type of food	Dietary characteristics
		Etiquette when people eat
		Types of food
		Eating habits
		Descriptions about meals
Holiday, celebrations	1). Days when most people do not go to work or school, especially because of a religious or national celebration 2). A special event that people organize in order to celebrate something	Origin, purpose, and significance of different holidays
		Symbols and signs of the holidays
		Particular activities related to the holiday
		Special celebrations and activities
		Birthdays
Lifestyle	1). The way in which a person or a group of people lives and works 2). Daily activities related to a person's everyday life	Daily routines schedule
		Interpersonal interaction and social activities
		Activities and styles of family life
		Consumption, fashion and shopping
Customs, behavior	1). An accepted way of behaving or of doing things in a society or a community, the way a person always behaves 2). The way someone behaves or functions in a particular situation	Wedding ceremony traditions
		Invitation and greeting traditions
		Social traditions and norms
		Culturally bound norms
Values, beliefs, attitudes	1). Beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life 2). A strong feeling that something exists or is true, confidence that something is good or right 3). The way that you think and feel about something, the way that you behave towards something that shows how you think and feel	What is good, beneficial, useful, beautiful, desirable, appropriate, etc.
		Positive and negative values in life
		Values for love, life, and work
		Ethics
		Racism, sexism etc.
		What is wrong, negative, inappropriate, etc.
Hobbies, leisure	Activities that you do for pleasure when you are not working	TV program preferences
		Video games, reading books
		Important aspects of one's free time
		Hobbies and activities done voluntarily and for fun
Clothes	The things that you wear, such as trousers, dresses, shirts, and jackets	Jeans, trousers, pants
		Culturally traditional wearing
		Shirts, jackets, jumpers
		References to fashion style

Note: all the definitions are based on the Oxford Learner's Dictionary and the work of Xiao (2010), p. 40.