English Textbooks in Sweden
– Textbook Choice, Evaluation and the English Syllabi
## Contents

1  **Introduction**  
   1.1  Background to research  
   1.2  Broad aims of research  
   1.3  Statement of research aims  
   1.4  Structure of essay  

2  **Literature Review**  
   2.1  English as an International Language (EIL) and English Language Teaching (ELT)  
   2.1.1  Marxian approaches  
   2.1.2  Linguistic imperialism  
   2.1.3  Quirk and ‘liberation linguistics’  
   2.2  Approaches to evaluating EFL textbooks  
   2.2.1  Sheldon (1988)  
   2.2.2  Hutchinson and Torres (1994)  
   2.2.3  Matsuda (2002)  
   2.2.4  Hatoss (2004)  
   2.3  Swedish studies  

3  **English in Sweden**  
   3.1  ELT in Sweden: an overview  
   3.2  EIL and the case of Sweden  

4  **Methodology**  
   4.1  Data collection method  
   4.2  Textbook analysis model  

5  **Empirical Material**  
   5.1  Presentation of questionnaire results  
   5.2  Presentation of textbook analysis  

6  **Discussion**  
   6.1  Discussion of questionnaire results  
   6.2  Discussion of textbook analysis  

7  **Conclusions and Implications**  
   7.1  Conclusions  
   7.2  Implications  

**Primary Sources**  
**Secondary Sources**  
**Appendix**
1 Introduction

1.1 Background to research
Traditionally, the official model for all teaching of English in Sweden has been British Standard English, explicitly stated by the syllabus (Skolverket 1969). Today however, focus has shifted from one of language standards toward a more “world Englishes” approach to the subject, stressing the importance of English as a tool for inter-cultural communication (Skolverket 1994). English language teaching (ELT) has gone from the teaching of English as the language of Britain to the teaching of English as an international language (EIL) of the world.

1.2 Broad aims of research
What does this shift mean for the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Sweden today? And more specifically, what does it mean for the use and choice of textbooks in Swedish senior high schools? Is the textbook choice in line with this change so that the most popular textbooks currently in use reflect this change and promote inter-cultural understanding?

When it comes to research on EFL textbooks, current studies tend to focus on the actual texts. Through text analysis, issues of, for example, gender (Cause 1997, Panzner 1996, Sakita, 1995, Utz 1992), ideology (Baik 1995), culture (Aliakbari 2005), identity (Yen 2000), ethnicity (Fandio 2003, Redling 1978) and Anglo-American cultural dominance (von Ziegesar 1974, Yamanaka 2006) have been studied. However, little has been said about what textbooks are being used, how that choice is made, and how well the textbooks correspond to the intentions of the syllabus? Using Sweden as a point of departure, where English is mainly taught as a foreign language, the results from this study will hopefully give a better understanding of the relationship between linguistic theory, the syllabus, and the use of EFL textbooks.

1.3 Statement of research aims
This essay has three aims. One is to find out what are the most commonly used textbooks in Swedish senior high schools. A second aim is to identify how the choice of textbooks is made. What are the most common reasons for choosing a certain textbook? The third aim is to give an answer to the broader question of how/to what extent the most common textbook/s reflect the Swedish syllabus’s intentions of ‘ensuring that the pupils develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures’ (Skolverket 1994). In other words, the aims of this essay are:

1. To identify some of the most frequently used English textbooks currently in use in senior high schools of Stockholm.
2. To investigate the motivations of teachers in choosing a particular English textbook.
3. To investigate the extent to which the stated goals of the syllabi are incorporated into the design and content of the most popular textbook/s.
1.4 Structure of essay
The essay will be structured as follows. In the following section I will present a literature review, in which the issue of English as an international language and how that relates to the concerns of English language teaching, and theories of textbook evaluation and textbook choice will be addressed. There will also be a review of what similar studies have been carried out in Sweden.

In the next section an overview of the case of English in Sweden will be given. In the methods section the evaluation criteria model will be developed which will serve as a model of analysis of the textbooks. Here I will also give an account of how the data of textbook use and choice was collected. The data will then be presented and discussed in the section on empirical results, followed by conclusions and implications for further research.

2 Literature Review
In the literature review that follows two types of literature will be examined: (1) readings/theories of English as an ‘international language’ and English language teaching, and (2) literature on the evaluation of textbooks.

2.1 English as an International Language (EIL) and English Language Teaching (ELT)
English continues to grow as an international language throughout the world. The number of speakers has increased almost ten-fold since 1900, and the fastest growing section is the one of speakers of EFL (e.g. Swedish English speakers). In fact there are currently more non-native speakers of English than there are native.

Traditionally this spread has been considered as something natural, neutral and beneficial (Pennycook 1994:9). But since the 1970s many scholars have argued that because language and culture are closely intertwined, the teaching of EFL also to some extent means imposing the value-system of the language, its culture.

2.1.1 Marxian approaches
Alastair Pennycook’s (1994) book The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language attempts to present an overview of and reflect upon what is going on in the debate of English and its cultural politics around the world. According to Pennycook (1994:12), English is not neutral, there are cultural implications of ELT, and English does function as a gatekeeper both nationally and internationally across the globe. In his view, EIL can be understood as ‘a discursive construct; rather than being some objective descriptive category, it is a whole system of power/knowledge relationships which produce very particular understandings of English and English language teaching’ (Pennycook 1994:26).

Some writers have claimed that the very concept of an “international” or “world” language is an invention of Western imperialism (e.g. Phillipson 1992). Pennycook (1994), for his part, wants to ‘move beyond a reductive theory of imperialism’. Rather, he aims to find a space between on the one hand a structuralist view of language as an idealized, abstract system disconnected to its surroundings, and on the
other a materialist view of language that reduces it to its context and therefore sees language use as determined by worldly circumstances (Pennycook 1994:57). Instead of taking a deterministic stance where the spread of English is seen as inevitably imperialistic, hegemonic or linguist, he admits that English does open up possibilities and argues that ‘to dismiss their learning and using of English as colonization is to put them in a new academic imperialism’. Rather he calls for a pedagogy that could confront what he calls “the worldliness” of English and become a means for social change. Since English, and no other language or knowledge for that matter, can never be neutral or apolitical, ”critical pedagogy” is to acknowledge the political nature of all education (Pennycook 1994:297). Taking this middle way, he acknowledges on the one hand the need for central norms of language use – that there is a need to ensure students’ access to the standard forms that are linked to social and economic prestige – and on the other, students need to be encouraged to use English in their own way, to appropriate English for their own ends (Pennycook 1994:315-316).

In a later article, Pennycook goes on to argue that English can become a means of change, and identifies two major stances on how to achieve these goals: “access”, and “transformation”. The “access” idea stresses the importance of ensuring students with powerful linguistic tools (i.e. a prestige standard language) before engaging in critical literacy. “Transformation” on the other hand, takes the student as a starting point, with student-centered pedagogies and participatory education. It aims at “empowerment” through the ‘opening of pedagogical spaces for marginalized peoples’ (Pennycook 1999:338).

2.1.2 Linguistic imperialism
Another researcher who has been influential in the field of critical linguistics is Robert Phillipson, who represents what Pennycook would refer to as “inclusion approach”. Phillipson’s main contribution is the concept of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson 1992), and his analysis of the political relations between what he refers to as the “core English-speaking countries” (i.e. Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) and the “periphery English-speaking countries” (i.e. all countries where English is spoken either as a second or foreign language). Phillipson’s definition of English linguistic imperialism is that:

the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages (Phillipson 1992:47)

Regarding the issue of ELT, Phillipson is highly critical of the way in which the native speaker is promoted as the ideal English teacher, which he considers both unscientific and inappropriate (Phillipson 1992:12) According to him, untrained native speaker teacher is often ignorant of the structure of their mother tongue. A more desirable model, in Phillipson’s view, would be similar to the European foreign language teaching tradition. In Europe, the ideal teacher has native / near native-
speaker proficiency in the foreign language, but shares the same linguistic and cultural background as the learners. This is seen as the ideal since they have gone through the complex process of acquiring English and therefore have insight in the needs (linguistic as well as cultural) of their learners. They know how mother tongue and target language differ and what is difficult, and they have first hand experience of acquiring and using a second/foreign language. This means, according to Phillipson, that a minimal requirement of all teachers of English as a second or foreign language, regardless if they are native or non-native speakers, should be that they have proven experience of and success in learning and using a second/foreign language.

2.1.3 Quirk and ‘liberation linguistics’
Randolph Quirk (1990) represents a pull in the other direction, calling for an “access-oriented” approach to the teaching of EFL. In his renowned article ‘Language varieties and Language Standards’ he argues that focus should be on the acquirement of a ‘standard English’, and that the only real empowerment is obtained through the acquirement of a prestige language, preferably obtained through exposure to native-speakers. To deny students access to a prestige variety in the name of language liberation, would be a disservice and make them defenseless to those in power to promote or employ them, he argues. They would be cheated by such ‘tolerant pluralism’, because of the very power of English as an instrument of international communication (Quirk 1990:10). He thinks that the interest in varieties has got out of hand and has started blinding teachers and that too many have absorbed the idea that what ‘appears to be flawed may in fact be a manifestation of a new – though as yet unrecognized – variety of English’ and that the implications of this in education are “horrendous” (Quirk 1990:4-9).

A common counter-argument to Quirk and the “access approach” is that it merely leads to the assimilation to an unquestioned mainstream, and that pedagogy is reduced to “pedagogy of deferral”, in which critical literacy is put off in favor of mastery (Pennycook 1999:339).

2.2 Approaches to evaluating EFL textbooks
EFL textbooks are often criticized for promoting Western ideals, Anglo-American culture, and ethnocentric perspectives on the world order, and for maintaining or even reconstructing the “inner circle’s” ¹ dominant position (Phillipson 1992, Pennycook 1994). There have been numerous suggestions for how to avoid Anglo-American cultural hegemony, and there is a trend in recent EFL textbooks to promote multicultural perspectives (Kachru 1990).

Textbooks are the “visible heart” of any ELT program, yet by many teachers seen as a necessary evil. A problem for many EFL teachers is how to make an informed choice when selecting a textbook. In order to make such a choice the textbook has to be evaluated. Even though the textbook as a phenomenon has been little studied, there

¹ Inner, Outer and Expanding circles of English as defined by Kachru (1990)
have been a few studies dealing with textbook evaluation. In this section I will present
the evaluative models posed by Sheldon (1988), Hutchinson and Torres (1994),
Matsuda (2002), and Hatoss (2004).

2.2.1 Sheldon (1988)
Sheldon (1988) sees the choice of textbooks as both emotive and controversial.
Textbooks represent a problem and a potential reason for educational failure. He
points out that even though ‘ELT course book publishing is a multi-million pound industry, yet the whole business of product assessment is haphazard and under-
researched’ and that purchase is often ‘a compromise between commercial and pedagogical demands’ (Sheldon 1988:237).

In his view, there is a “course book credibility gap” due to conflicting interests in
the creation of textbooks. Teachers, students and educational administrators all have
their different notions of what a ‘good textbook’ should be. Teachers often go for
popularity when choosing a textbook, in the belief that ‘somehow, somewhere,
someone must be doing something right’ (Sheldon 1988:240).

According to Sheldon, some of the criticism of textbooks might be grounded in the
fact that textbooks often imitate each other, and do not ‘take on the winds of change
when it comes to the pedagogical implications of current theory and research in
linguistics and language learning’, as for example the use of artificial, whole-sentence
dialogues and cultural inappropriateness (Sheldon 1988:239). Therefore, he sees it as
a paradox that teacher-generated material often has less credibility than published
books, since teacher-created worksheets are a consequence of a more up-to date
“communicative approach” to language acquisition.

Sheldon suggests an evaluative model with 17 “common core factors” to look for in
order to make the evaluation and selection of textbooks more systematic and
informed. Basically, he calls for more localized textbooks designed to meet the needs
of learners and teachers. The evaluation criteria are concerned mainly with the
linguistic features of the book and its structure and layout, but he also includes factors
such as the avoidance of stereotypes and cultural appropriateness. It is also interesting
to note that Sheldon – in 1988 – foresaw that with what he referred to as ‘desk-top
publishing’ (digital media, the internet) the textbook would eventually disappear.

2.2.2 Hutchinson and Torres (1994)
Hutchinson and Torres (1994) agree with Sheldon (1988) that the textbook has been
little studied, even though it represents an almost universal element of ELT. The
studies that have been made are generally critical, claiming that textbooks produce a
kind of dependency culture among teachers and learners. In many cases it is easier for
a teacher to sit back and operate the system, than to creatively engage in producing
self-made materials. Here, the idea is that a “good teacher” does not follow textbooks,
but devices his/her own materials. But, according to Hutchinson and Torres (1994),
studies have shown that teachers who use self-made materials are in fact more
conservative in that they often use the same material over and over again, because of
the prestige they have invested in the material and their creation.
Textbooks have also been criticized for their format, which is not believed to ‘sit well with current ideas about teaching and learning in applied linguistics, and go against current research’s ideas about the dynamic and interactive nature of the language learning process. If one were to take such criticism into account, the textbooks would, in accordance with Sheldon’s (1988) argument, have withered away. Still, the trend is rather that the textbook is growing in importance, and the newer ones are actually getting more and more detailed, with more additional materials, and more detailed instructions for teachers. Far from becoming looser, as one would expect judging from research in applied linguistics, textbooks quite contrary are getting tighter and more comprehensive and explicit (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:315-316).

According to Hutchinson and Torres, textbooks survive for the simple reason that they satisfy the need for structure and predictability in education interaction. In their view, we need to place more value on the importance of structure in people’s lives. Considering the full needs of the people involved, Hutchinson and Torres find that ‘effective management’ is actually the greatest need in the classroom (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:317), something that the textbook can provide.

They also dismiss the idea that textbooks constrain negotiation. Quite contrary, it makes it possible by providing something to negotiate about (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:319). Structure does not constrain creativity. Rather, absolute freedom of choice puts strains on creativity, as it is both confusing and frightening. Textbooks provide a secure framework for creativity and choice to take place (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:324).

When implementing curriculum change, more tightly structured material is needed, keeping the results closer to the intentions of curriculum developers, which in turn would lead to more satisfaction among teachers (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:321-23). In sum, they argue that we should abandon the generally hostile attitude to textbooks, and instead focus on how to help teachers become better consumers of textbooks, teaching them how to select and use them effectively.

2.2.3 Matsuda (2002)
Let us return to “critical pedagogy” and the idea that the teaching of EFL also to some extent means imposing the value-system of the language, its culture. An article dealing with this matter is Matsuda’s ‘International understanding through teaching World Englishes’ (Matsuda 2002). Matsuda admits that English is ‘by no means a magic wand’ for international understanding but believes that it could contribute to it if the language was presented appropriately and used effectively. Taking the example of Japan, Matsuda points to the fact that the representations of “English” in Japanese textbooks focus almost exclusively on the countries of the “inner circle”, and then preferably American English. An overwhelming majority of the main characters are “inner circle” or Japanese, and the “inner circle” characters are given “bigger roles” in that they utter more words. The use of English as a lingua franca is only acknowledged in sections other than the regular chapters, and completely absent in the main texts (Matsuda 2002:437). Considering the ‘important roles of textbooks in
EFL classrooms /… / it may be possible to say at least that the representation of English is problematic from the perspective of international understanding’ (Matsuda 2002:438). This is because limited exposure leads to a limited understanding of the world, and because incomplete representation leads to confusion and resistance in the encounter with other varieties of English, and a viewing of them as deficient rather than different. And this, Matsuda concludes, is counter-productive to international understanding (Matsuda 2002:438).

In order to promote international understanding, textbooks should include more characters from outer/expanding circles of English and assign them “bigger roles”. And even if, say, American English is chosen as a target model, students must be made aware of other varieties of English, through representation of different varieties of English and the presence of characters from outer and expanding circle countries in the textbooks. They should also include interaction between non-native speakers, which would help students understand that their future interlocutors may be non-native speakers, just like themselves (Matsuda 2002:439).

2.2.4 Hatoss (2004)

In a fairly recent study, Hatoss (2004) suggests a more explicit model for evaluating textbooks that is in line with Matsuda’s (and the Swedish syllabus’s) concern for international understanding. Hatoss argues that in the “globalized” world teaching culture and developing inter-cultural sensitivity has become a main concern for teachers. Her aim is to present a model for the evaluation of textbooks in terms of their efficiency and adequacy in teaching culture and developing inter-cultural skills. Even though Hatoss acknowledges that cultural learning is not limited to the classroom, she argues that textbooks are important, especially when learners have limited access to other sources of cultural knowledge, and maybe even more so when the teacher is not him/herself part of the target culture. She refers to that there is research evidence that textbooks do play an important role in developing cultural attitudes (Wright 1999). Still, language textbooks seem to have serious deficiencies in taking this responsibility seriously (Hatoss 2004:25). She states that textbooks often lack a systematic discussion of the value systems underlying cultural behavior, and that a systematic approach to the handling of contact with native speakers rarely appears. In addition, the notion of stereotypes is merely touched upon (Hatoss 2004:25-26).

In an attempt to come to terms with these problems, she suggests a 20-criteria checklist that would help evaluate the cultural content of language textbooks. The criteria should be evaluated in three steps. In the first step, “input”, we should look for sociolinguistic variation (i.e. class, age group, and cultural background) and a diverse selection of linguistic cultural input that is authentic. When looking at “cultural authenticity” one should look at whether the textbook represents culture in a valid and up-to-date way and if culture is being taught explicitly or implicitly (the argument being that explicit teaching would lead to critical inter-cultural speakers in constant dynamic negotiation with the outside world). Finally, when looking at the “goals and motivations of the textbook writers and publishers”, one should identify whether it
requires learners to adopt the behaviors and norms of the target culture, or merely reflect upon them (i.e. assimilation vs. reflection).

2.3 Swedish studies

In Sweden there have been very few studies on the evaluation of textbooks. On the other hand, there have been a handful of undergraduate theses on the analysis of textbooks from various perspectives, and their relation to the English syllabi. Höglund (2006) carried out a study on the relationship between textbooks and the grading criteria set up in the syllabus. Interestingly, she found that one grading-criterion that was missing in the textbooks was reflection over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English speaking countries. This is especially interesting to note, considering the explicit aim stated in the syllabus for English. Höglund also found that grammar takes up too large space considering the fact that there is no explicit mentioning of grammar in the syllabus.

Carlswärd and Lindman (2006) investigated gender roles in two textbooks of English and French used in senior high schools, and their correspondence to the part of the syllabus dealing with equality between the sexes. Siméus (2007) looked at representations of aesthetic and anthropologic culture respectively and to what degree these representations correspond to the aims of the English course syllabi.

Israelsson (2007) investigated teachers’ attitudes towards teaching aids and authentic material, while Nilsson (2006) investigated what teachers and students think about the use of textbooks and alternative materials respectively, finding that both teachers and learners saw positive as well as negative aspects of using the two types of material. Interestingly, Nilsson’s thesis confirms both Hutchinson and Torres (1994) ideas of the textbook as providing a necessary structure, and for example Hatoss’s (2004) call for up-to-date material.

3 English in Sweden

3.1 ELT in Sweden: an overview

Language teaching has always held a place of honor in the Swedish curriculum. Since Swedish is a “small” language spoken by very few (about 9 million people), knowledge of foreign languages is a key to success, especially since Sweden is a country heavily dependent on exports (Cabua-Lampa 1999). The tradition of teaching English (alongside German and French) as a foreign language is long and dates back to the 16th century (Svartvik 2000). As early as 1878 English was introduced as a “common core” subject, and in 1905 it was made compulsory for high school students. In 1962, it was made compulsory from the 3rd or 4th grade until the last school year. Today each municipality decides when teaching of English should begin, but the minimum requirement of 480 learning hours per year means that most schools introduce English earlier that the 3rd grade (Cabua-Lampa 1999).

After 9 years of compulsory school, all students are offered a senior high school education. The education is free of charge but non-compulsory. The most recent curriculum for senior high school education entered into effect July 1st 1994. There are three levels of regulatory policy. At the top, we find the Education Act that
defines school’s basic role in achieving the overall objectives of the education. At the next level we find the curriculum which states the fundamental values and basic guidelines that should permeate all subjects. At the bottom we find the course syllabi (relevant for this study) and the grading criteria (Skolverket 2007).

All senior high school programs include eight core subjects, one of which is English (the others being arts, physical education, mathematics, general science, social studies, Swedish, and religion). English consists of three courses; A, B, and C. Only English A is a core subject course. It is a broad course which builds on the education in the compulsory school. English B builds on English A but is more analytical in focus. It covers varying language usage and familiarity with English-speaking cultures is developed. Even though English B is not a core subject course it is common for the four most common programs (Arts, Natural Science, Social Science and Technology). English C is an optional course but often a requirement for higher education and most vocational work, which in practice means that most students opt for it (Skolverket 2007).

Most senior high schools are municipal, yet the recent trend is an increasing number of privately run (independent) schools. Privately run schools basically follow the same curriculum and syllabi as the municipal schools, and receive grants from the municipality (Skolverket 2007).

3.2 EIL and the case of Sweden

In Sweden, English is used as an international language, in that it is used predominantly for international purposes, in communication with native as well as non-native speakers of English. English also functions as a gatekeeper for both higher education and upward social mobility (Pennycook 1999). Promoting inter-cultural skills, the Swedish syllabus states that:

The subject aims at developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts, and an increasingly internationalised labour market, in order to take advantage of the rapid developments taking place, as a result of information and communications technologies, as well as for further studies. The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures. (Syllabus for English, Skolverket 1994)

In the overall goals for the subject formulated in the current syllabus it is stated that students should be able to ‘reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures’ (Syllabus for English, Skolverket 1994). This becomes even more evident when looking at the syllabi of the specific English courses. The syllabus for English A, for example states that students should be able to:

- understand clearly enunciated speech from different regions
- acquire knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries
- have knowledge of social conditions, cultural traditions and ways of living in English-speaking areas, and be able to use this knowledge to compare cultures (Course criteria for English A, Skolverket 1994)

And in the syllabus for English B they are required to:

- have knowledge of current conditions, history and cultures of the countries where English is spoken
- be able to present aspects of their own culture and country to persons from a different cultural background (Course syllabus for English B, Skolverket 1 July 1994)

Finally, in the syllabus for English C the students should:

- be familiar with developments in one or more areas such as politics, societal life, religion, literature, film, art or music in an English-speaking country (Course criteria for English C, Skolverket 1994)

As we can see from the above, the syllabi have embraced an “inclusion approach” to the teaching of English, stressing the importance of inter-cultural communication and cultural understanding, as well as the understanding of different varieties of English. It is interesting to note that this standpoint was taken as early as in 1994, especially considering the continuous debate over “world Englishes”, varieties and standards.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection method

There are no general statistics on what books are being used in Swedish schools. Trying to get hold of data, I have consulted the Swedish Board of Education (Skolverket, Sept 2007), who do not keep track of what books are being used and refers to that it is up to each and every municipality to decide what textbooks to purchase. The municipality (in this case Stockholm) for their part say that it is up to each and every school to decide upon the choice of textbooks, especially now since private schools are becoming more and more popular (Stockholm stads utbildningsförvaltning, Sept 2007).

The difficulty in finding data continued as I turned to the publishing firms of Swedish textbooks. None of the largest ones (Bonnier, Liber, Natur & Kultur and Gleerups) want to reveal statistics over which of their books are bestsellers or how many copies they sell. The only information I got was when I asked them what books at other competing publishing firms they thought were bestsellers. Reading between the lines, this would mean that among the more popular books we would expect to find Short Cuts from the publisher Bonnier, Blueprint from Liber, Straight Forward from Natur & Kultur, and Stepping Stone from Gleerups. All these books have been out for at least 5 years. Combined with the fact that most textbooks in Sweden are distributed in class sets and not owned by the students, this means that probably a lot of books are being passed on and used over and over again.
Due to the difficulty in finding data, a survey was carried out. Considering the limited scope of this essay, I chose to look closer at the senior high schools in Stockholm. In terms of representation this means 16 percent of the total amount of senior high schools in Sweden. Even when counted by number of students, the Stockholm students constitute 16 percent of the total (Skolverket 2007).

In order to give an answer to the first two research questions, namely what books are being used and why, a questionnaire was used. In the questionnaire two questions were posed, giving the opportunity to give three responses to each question: 1. *Name the 3 most popular English textbooks being used in your school*, and 2. *Which factors influence the choice of English textbooks in your school? Please give what you consider the 3 most important reasons determining the choice of textbooks. (Feel free to write more if you have time)*

The questionnaire was sent by e-mail (26 November 2007) and the responses were handed in the same way. The questionnaire reached out to 84 head teachers of English in the Stockholm region and out of these 39 (or 46 percent) answered the questions. The total number of schools in Sweden being 494, this means that around 8 percent of the total number of English head teachers in Sweden answered the questionnaire. Consequently, the teachers of about 25,000 senior high school students were reached. This considered, I hope that the findings would be representative enough to at least give us a hint of what are the most popular English textbooks in Sweden, and why they are chosen.

### 4.2 Textbook analysis model

In this section a set of evaluation criteria will be developed that, according to current linguistic research, would ensure that textbooks promote international and cultural understanding. In developing this set of criteria, I will draw on the models presented by Hatoss (2004), Matsuda (2002) and to some extent Sheldon (1988) and Phillipson (1992), while adjusting them to the Swedish situation. When referring to “textbook” I will use Hatoss’s definition of textbook as ‘a commercially available book used in language teaching programs’ (Hatoss 2004:25).

Hatoss (2004) suggests a 20-criteria checklist that would help evaluate the cultural content of language textbooks. These criteria are mostly concerned with what is actually being taught by the textbooks in terms of inter-cultural understanding. Among the 20 criteria I have chosen 8 (number 3 and 6 have been adjusted to fit a yes/no formula):

1. Is the linguistic input culturally dense (slang, expressions, idioms)?
2. Is there paralinguistic (nonverbal) communication?
3. Does the textbook teach high as well as low culture?
4. Does the material teach deep culture (orientations, values, etc.)?
5. Is cultural knowledge taught explicitly?
6. Does the textbook aim at dialogue between cultures rather than assimilation into a second culture?
7. Does the textbook encourage reflection?
8. Has first culture a role in teaching second culture?
In Matsuda’s (2002) view textbooks should also, in order to promote international understanding, include more characters from outer/expanding circles of English and assign them “bigger roles”. And even if, say, American English is chosen as a target model, students must also be exposed to different varieties of English. The textbooks should also include interaction between non-native speakers. (Matsuda 2002:439):

9. Do the texts include characters from outer/expanding circles of English?
10. Does the material include different varieties of English other than the target model?
11. Are people from outer/expanding circles of English assigned bigger roles, i.e. main characters?
12. Is there interaction between non-native speakers of English?

When it comes to Sheldon’s (1988) 17 evaluation criteria, two of them are applicable to this study, in that they somehow measure how well a book would promote inter-cultural skills: (1) authenticity and (2) cultural bias (Sheldon 1988:244). Using Sheldon’s sub-questions, we end up with 5 points of analysis:

13. Is the textbook’s content obviously realistic, i.e. taken from L1\(^2\) material not initially intended for ELT purposes?
14. Do the tasks exploit language in a communicative or ‘real world’ way?
15. Are different religious and social environments represented?
16. Do the texts include social realities such as unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns, racism, etc?
17. Has first language a role in teaching second language?

Further, criticism has been put forward by Phillipson (1992) that the textbook industry as a whole is too centered to the core English speaking countries, a multi billion dollar industry that serves the economic interests of foremost Britain and the U.S.A. Following Phillipson’s line of argument it would hence be preferable that the textbook be produced and published in the learner country and that the authors share the same linguistic background as their readers. (Phillipson 1992):

18. Was the book originally produced and published in Sweden?
19. Does the autor/s share the linguistic background of its learners?

Finally, I thought it would be interesting to see whether there is a stated target language of the book, since this used to be the case in Sweden but no longer is, at least not formally (Skolverket 1994).

20. Has a formal “target language” been abandoned?

\(^2\) English as a first language
In sum, the checklist for this study ended up with 20 evaluation criteria that would somehow promote the cultural understanding and inter-cultural ability that the Swedish syllabus is aiming for.

5 Empirical Material

In this section I will (1) present the results from the questionnaire to head teachers of English in Stockholm and (2) present the result from the analysis of the textbook.

5.1 Presentation of questionnaire results

In the first question, the teachers were asked to name the three most popular books currently in use in their school. 39 teachers answered the questionnaire and since they could name 1 to 3 books, a total of 78 answers were given. The results were diverse. A number of books were named ranging from sheer grammar books (like Murphy’s English Grammar) and literature anthologies (Streams in Literature), to all-in-one textbooks (e.g. Short Cuts). Among these answers, the most common response however, was the use of no book at all (15). Many respondents commented on this saying that they use self-made material or sources from the Internet instead. Here it is important to note that if a teacher answers no book, they are less likely to give more than one answer, which in turn means that this answer is even more “common”. The second most frequent answer was Blueprint (10), a Swedish produced, all-in-one textbook from the publisher Liber AB. If we include Blueprint’s additional material; Read and React (1), and Read and Log on (1), Blueprint mounts to a total of 12 occurrences. However, even these included it only makes up 15 percent of the total amount of answers.

Table 1: Textbook use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No book</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueprint</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Cuts</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streams in Literature</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and Proceed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springboard</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid Ground</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight Forward</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toolbox</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bok och Web</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonniers Engelska grammatik</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Hopper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP Now</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Grammar Check</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Blueprint is one of the books that the publishers regarded as a bestseller, and so is *Short Cuts* the second most frequent book (7). However, it is interesting to note the low frequency of the other two “bestsellers”: *Straight Forward* (2) and *Stepping Stone* (1).

The second most frequent book, *Short Cuts*, is named 7 times, which means that it is about half as popular as *Blueprint* and make up less than 10 percent of the total. Still, as the results above show, the choice of books is diverse. As many as 23 books, or almost a third, are only mentioned once. Three books are designed for vocational programs: *Toolbox* (2), *Highly Recommended English* (1), and *Tech Talk* (1).

Looking at the publishers, the picture is not as diverse.
The most common publisher Liber - the home of Blueprint - has four books out there that together occur 24 times. Liber is followed by Bonnier (14), Gleerups (5), Natur & Kultur (3), Cambridge University Press (2), Oxford University press (2) and Longman (1). This means that a striking majority of the books currently at use in the schools are produced in Sweden.

To the second question - that of the motivations behind a certain choice of textbook - 71 answers were given. Even if the answers were diverse, a pattern emerged in which 9 categories of motivations were identified. In the table below the categories are presented as well as quotations from the respondents. According to these findings it seems as though internal features - namely text selection (17), versatility (11), exercises (8), and layout (8) - are ascribed higher importance than external conditions such as the level of the students (7), money (6), teachers’ attitudes (6), and accessibility (4).

Table 2 Motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text selection</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interesting texts that the students can relate to</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the material is up-to-date</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic texts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject fields instead of isolated texts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Versatility and flexibility in usage</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in usage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD or other additional material for the students to use</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both reading/ listening options when it comes to a text</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned for oral work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versatility</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercises and vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful exercises</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good vocabulary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Test yourself” chapters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises Keys</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composition and layout</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout (easy to read, lots of pictures and</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different colours etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All gathered in one book</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too thick and frightening for the students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of the students</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of the student</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of difficulty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability to course criteria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What books my predecessor bought</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher's attitude/pedagogical orientation</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it attracts the individual teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it relates to modern teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A modern cultural perspective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I think the students should know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the main writers were two of us at</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access for teachers and students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of books</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honestly don’t know.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoints from students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra material available in the teacher’s</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71
At this point it is important to remember the respondents who answered “no book” consequently did not answer the second question. On the other hand, all respondents who named at least one book gave at least one response as to what motivations lie behind that choice.

5.2 Presentation of textbook analysis

Due to the scope of this essay, I have been forced to narrow down the material so that only the most popular textbook according to the questionnaire will be analyzed. Therefore, in this section the results from the analysis of the most frequent book *Blueprint* will be presented.

As explained above, a checklist has been used with 20 evaluation criteria that according to recent research would promote international understanding and intercultural ability, which in turn would help promote a “world Englishes” approach to the subject that the Swedish syllabus is aiming for. The results are presented in the table below.
The first criteria, slang or idiomatic expressions, were found in several texts in *Blueprint*, for example there were many in a comic strip by Craig Thompson (Strange Powers on page 120) on the issue of fitting in and befriending the right person; cool, the pack, guys, nerds, faggots, wussy pads, guts, jock, redneck, etc. When it comes to non-verbal communication the analysis was not as straight forward. There is an exercise (p. 28) in which the students are requested to make up a story of a cartoon strip without speech bubbles. This means that the students do train their ability to interpret paralinguistic communication. However there are no instances of exercises or texts where non-verbal communication is taught in the sense that Hatoss (2004) is looking for – exercises that would somehow contrast different ways of communica-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Is the linguistic input culturally dense (slang, expressions, idioms)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Is there paralinguistic (nonverbal) communication?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Does the textbook teach high as well as low culture?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Does the material teach deep culture (orientations, values, etc)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Is cultural knowledge taught explicitly?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Does the textbook aim at dialogue between cultures rather than assimilation into a second culture?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Does the textbook encourage reflection?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Has first culture a role in teaching second culture?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Do the texts include characters from outer/expanding circles of English?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Does the material include different varieties of English other than the target model?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Are people from outer/expanding circles of English assigned bigger roles, i.e. main characters?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Is there interaction between non-native speakers of English?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Is the textbook’s content obviously realistic, i.e. taken from L1 material not initially intended for ELT purposes?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Do the tasks exploit language in a communicative or ‘real world’ way?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Are different religious and social environments represented?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Do the texts include social realities such as unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns, racism, etc?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Has first language a role in teaching second language?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Was the book originally produced and published in Sweden?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Does the author/s share the linguistic background of its learners?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Has a formal “target language” been abandoned?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ting non-verbally. So the answer to the second criteria is no, even though there are some examples in pictures.

There is no doubt, however, that Blueprint teaches both high and low culture. As examples of the latter we find cartoons, passages on movie-making, file sharing, computer games, Frank Zappa, bungee jumping, sports as entertainment, an article from the magazine Cosmopolitan, and so on. In fact there are more representations of so-called low culture than high. As examples of high culture we find passages from novels and newspapers. Still, all of these revolve around somehow controversial subjects like sexuality, spanking of children, and race issues – subjects and media that fit well into criteria number 4 (deep culture) and 13-15 (authentic language and social realities). Gone are the “classics” like poetry and novels by great authors of the past, texts on traditional arts and music, which were common in textbooks just 10 years ago. Moreover, the book does take a very communicative approach to each subject or theme, encouraging reflection and discussion as suggested in criteria 7. All chapters end with the exercise “Read, Listen & React” which contains questions about the content, and “Reflect & Share” where questions for discussion and reflection are being posed.

When it comes to the question whether cultural knowledge is taught explicitly (criteria 5) the answer must be yes, even though it is dubious. It is taught in the sense that language differences and ways of expression are contrasted and highlighted throughout the exercise part of the book. Different formats of writing like letters, reviews, essays etc. as well as different ways of speaking such as peer response, team debate etc, are taught explicitly. And all these formats are of course closely intertwined with culture, since they are culturally accepted ways of expressing oneself in the English speaking community. In that sense, there is a very strong recommendation/exhortation that the students use these formats and make them their own, which in turn means that the book aims at assimilation rather than dialogue (criteria 6). On the other hand, since first language plays such a vital part in the teaching of the foreign language (criteria 17) one could argue that this is enough as to affirm the students’ own identity and turn the language teaching into a dialogue in which both first culture and second culture take part. What is striking however is that none of Matsuda’s (2002) suggested criteria (9-12) are fulfilled by Blueprint. It does not include a single character from the outer/expanding circles of English (and hence they are not ascribed bigger roles), it does not include other varieties of English than the target language, and there is no interaction between non-native speakers.

Phillipson’s (1992) criteria (18-19), that the books should originate in the country of the learners and be written by authors with the same linguistic background have been fulfilled. It is published by the Swedish publisher Liber AB, and written by three Swedish high school teachers and authors: Christer Lundfall, Ralf Nyström and Jeanette Clayton.

As to the last criterion as to whether a target language has been abandoned the answer is no. It is clearly stated in Blueprint that it aims for either British RP or Gen. American English. In the wordlist both pronunciations are transcribed. When it comes
to vocabulary, it differs from text to text, depending on who wrote it. But, as mentioned before, there is no text written in another variety of English than these two.

6 Discussion

6.1 Discussion of questionnaire results

What can be said about the use and choice of textbooks according to this limited study? The first finding is that the most common choice is to abandon the textbook altogether. One could say that instead of making an informed choice, they choose not to choose at all. Many respondents commented on this saying that they use self-made material or sources from the Internet instead. What does this mean? Possibly it means that many teachers seem to have embraced the idea that that “good teachers” do not follow textbooks, but make their own materials. Still, there is no evidence that alternative material would be more in line with the aim of the syllabus. In fact, studies have shown that teachers who use self-made materials tend to be more conservative, using the same material year after year, because of the prestige they have invested in their creation (Hutchinson and Torres 1994:315). And if, like many respondents say, it is true that a lot of material is taken from the Internet, the question remains how alternative material is chosen. Material from the Internet may well be more homogenous than texts from textbooks, regarding the fact that a striking majority of Internet websites originate in the core English speaking countries. Applying Hutchinson and Torres (1994) ideas of change to the relatively rapid change ELT has gone through, from teaching a language spoken by a certain group of native speakers to teaching a tool for international communication, the textbook would not wither away, but quite contrarily serve as an effective agent of change. According to them, change is in its essence disruptive and potentially threatening. Therefore, a crucial factor in the process of change is security, a security that the textbook would account for. The results from this study show that textbooks do survive as important material still used in many schools today: the use of a textbook (regardless of which) compile 81 percent of the total amount of answers given to the first question.

The next finding is that among those who do use a textbook, the choice is diverse. However, there is one book that stands out as the most common textbook. What does this mean? Does this mean that Blueprint is so much “better” than the rest? I will come back to this question when discussing the results of the textbook analysis, but the overall question remains; could it be so that those who do use a textbook use Blueprint or possibly Short Cuts, vocational programs use textbooks made for their special circumstances, while the rest have given up on textbooks? Or is it so that Blueprint, more than the others, meet the requirements stated in the syllabus?

When it comes to the teachers’ motivations behind choosing a particular English textbook, there were a number of different answers. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that content plays a bigger part than worldly circumstances, such as price and accessibility, as one could have expected judging from current research on ELT textbook evaluation, which says that textbook choice is often a compromise between money and pedagogy. Overall, the reasons for choosing a certain book seem to sit fairly well with current theories on applied linguistics, stressing the importance of
authentic material and an interactive approach to learning. Even if the teachers’ motivations are sometimes more hands-on, many of them still share similar motivations to those of the mentioned researchers’ evaluation criteria. Whether this means that the teachers have done their homework when it comes to theories on ELT or if there are other reasons remains to be proved, but what could be said is that there seem to be a joint driving force as to what is considered desirable in a textbook.

6.2 Discussion of textbook analysis

The final point of analysis concerns the extent to which the stated goals of the syllabi (Skolverket 1994) are incorporated into the design and content of the most popular textbook/s. For this analysis a 20-point list of criteria was developed that would somehow reflect the syllabus’ demand for inter-cultural understanding. 13 of these criteria were fulfilled by the most popular textbook, Blueprint. When it comes to content, Blueprint contained: culturally dense language, high as well as low culture, deep culture, obviously realistic texts, communicative “real world” language, representations different religious / social environments, and social realities such as racism and poverty. On the other hand Blueprint contained no non-verbal communication.

When it comes to the less straightforward criteria, like if culture is taught explicitly, the answer was - after a bit of interpretation - yes. But only to the extent that it aims for assimilation to the target culture, rather than a dialogue between cultures as the 6th criteria called for. Regarding the role of first language and culture in the teaching of the foreign it seems to find a place in Blueprint. Likewise, the authors do share the linguistic background of its learners, and the book was accordingly produced and published in Sweden.

So, to the question whether the most popular textbook currently at use promotes inter-cultural understanding, the overall answer must – at least to a greater part of the criteria – be yes. Still, considering the syllabus’s aim for English as an international language of the world, it is pitiful to note that the texts in Blueprint contain no other varieties than those of the inner-circle and no characters other than inhabitants of the same, and no communication between non-native speakers. Interestingly, this means that none of Matsuda’s (2002) arguments for how to incorporate inter-cultural understanding into the design of textbooks (criteria 9-12) are met by Blueprint, while all of Sheldon’s (1988) criteria for textbook evaluation (criteria 13-17) were found in the book, and so were Phillipson’s (1992) call for non-native authors and in-country production and publication of textbooks. Regarding the criteria (1-8) posed by Hatoss (2004) all but two were found in Blueprint.

So, could it be said that the most popular textbook reflects the shift in focus from one of language standards toward a more “world Englishes” approach to the subject? Well, in the sense of teaching culture per se, Blueprint past the test. However, in terms of inter-culture, the answer is not as optimistic. Even though the syllabus does not go as far as to explicitly calling for the inclusion of non-native varieties of English, the statement ‘an expanding English-speaking world’ must mean the inclusion of such varieties as well without saying going as far as Phillipson (1992)
suggests, with the abandonment of the native speaker altogether. In that sense *Blueprint* is far from promoting such a development.

What is explicit though is the syllabus’s (1994) aim to promote cultural understanding. So, even if Quirk (1991) may be right in that the most important thing is to aim for a near-native proficiency that would give students the necessary tool for advancement – an approach based on the idea that this is the landscape: do what you have to do in order to get the most benefit – teachers in Sweden are confronted with a requirement of promoting inter-cultural skills as well.

So, what could be the reason why *Blueprint* does not live up to the requirements of promoting inter-cultural understanding? Is it just a question of time-lag between ideas and practices? Looking at the publishing dates of the articles it seems as if the older the article the more likely the criteria are incorporated in the textbook, a logic that in many respects is predictable and natural. Sheldon’s article was published in 1988 and all of his points are now evident in *Blueprint*, while there are no traces of Matsuda’s ideas, which were published in 2002. It is often said that medical research findings take about ten years to implement at the hospital, while the same within the pedagogical field takes about a hundred years to find its way into the classroom. True or not, this saying could explain the obvious difference between older and newer research results and their impact on textbooks of today. Hatoss’ criteria are much more present in the texts, even though her article is from 2004, and thereby the newest one. A possible explanation could be that Hatoss’ and Sheldon’s check-points are less controversial than those of Matsuda and Phillipson, making them more readily applied in the classroom context. In addition, Hatoss and Sheldon are more concerned with the explicit content of the texts, while Matsuda and Phillipson focus on the underlying, not as readily visible characteristics of the books such as the origin of characters, authors, and publishing firms.

Another possible explanation to the fact that the most popular textbook is both produced in Sweden and written by teachers working in Sweden, is that Sweden has a long tradition of teaching English. There has been time, so to speak, to develop material that resides in mother tongue culture, both in terms of production and in terms of using the mother tongue as a point of reference.

### 7 Conclusions and Implications
#### 7.1 Conclusions
In this essay I set out to 1) identify the most commonly used textbooks in Swedish senior high schools, 2) to investigate the driving forces behind choosing a certain book, and 3) to give answer to the broader question of how/to what extent the most common textbook/s reflect the Swedish syllabus’s intentions of promoting inter-cultural understanding. As for the first question, the most common answer was no book at all, while the choice among those who did use textbooks was diverse. But even if *Blueprint* stands out as the most common book, the fact that the teachers were asked to name the 3 most popular books at use in the school, those who answered no book is actually more common, since they were less likely to give more than one answer. Another finding that is worth noting, especially since it has been predicted
more than once that the textbook as a phenomenon would eventually wither away, this study tells us that textbooks are still widely used. 81 percent of the teachers use a textbook, even though the spread when it comes to which textbook they use is diverse.

The second question, aiming at identifying the reasons for choosing a particular book, there are two interesting findings. The first one is that the internal characteristics of the book seem to be more relevant when choosing a book, than external factors like, costs, level of the students or accessibility. This result shows that Sheldon’s (1988:237) understanding that textbook choice often is ‘a compromise between commercial and pedagogical demands’, is not completely true, at least not in Swedish senior high schools. Rather, teachers are more concerned with text selection, flexibility in usage, exercises and layout.

Now let us turn to the third and most important aim of this essay that has to do with the relation between the most common textbook and syllabi for English. The syllabus is clearly calling for the promotion of inter-cultural understanding by stating that the students should be able to ‘reflect over ways of living, cultural traditions and social conditions in English-speaking countries, as well as develop greater understanding and tolerance of other people and cultures’ (Skolverket1994). In this regard, Blueprint stands the test. On the other hand, the syllabus also calls for the inclusion of other varieties than RP or Gen. Am. Quoting the syllabus the ‘subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures’ (Skolverket1994). But since texts from the outer and expanding circles of English are absent in Blueprint, teachers using this book must use additional material in order to meet this requirement. If they actually do so, is impossible to know. As for the many students who are exposed to self-made material or material from the Internet, we know even less. It is obvious that a lot of responsibility lies with the teachers. It is up to them to interpret the syllabi and course criteria and strive for the fulfillment of all goals, regardless if they are present in the textbook or not. But is it not so, that textbooks alone are never enough to ensure that students attain the goals stated by the syllabi? In a communicative view of knowledge, both teachers and students must take active part in the construction of knowledge (see e.g. Vygotskij: 1999).

But since we know, from this study and others, that textbooks do play a big part even in today’s schooling, it is important to reflect over the material we expose students to and to make informed choices of what to use and not. As a reflection to the fact that Blueprint fails to fulfill many of the evaluation criteria I would like to go back to Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argument that limitations, or providing a frame, is not the same as constraining creativity. Take for example an artist who is about to make a painting. If you provide him with a canvas of a certain size and material, he will use the conditions at hand as a starting point for his creativity, possibly making him more productive than if you had asked him – without limits - to make a painting of any sort and size. I think this logic applies to good teaching as well. An active teacher provides the frames in terms of subjects, time, texts, recordings, questions, etc, and at the same time he opens up for discussion and negotiation. But without the frames we have nothing to refer to or question. Applying this idea to the concept of
the teaching of inter-cultural understanding, this would mean that even though a textbook might be portraying stereotypical images and promote Anglo-American cultural hegemony it would not constrain negotiation and reflection. In fact it would provide the very basis for negotiation to take place. Hopefully, this is what the continuous use of textbooks is telling us. Teachers and students engage in analytical processes that make content less important to the development of the students’ understanding of for example culture. If so, the critical pedagogy that Pennycook (1994) is calling for is indeed at work, and allows for the teaching of English to confront the “the worldliness” of the language and become a means for social change.

At this point it is important to consider the issue of learning outcomes. What is the actual desired learning outcome? Does the syllabus actually want the students to change their values? Or merely reflect upon their own and others’? This is also subject to the teachers’ interpretation. And if we do want to change values, is culture teachable or even learnable? The question is whether the student should become socially integrated or merely use target culture as a reference group. Conle et.al. (2000) argue that people cannot assimilate, that we cannot get rid of traditions and culture. We may appear to assimilate externally, but internally we do not. This would mean that people are inherently different, a claim that I am doubtful to. Such a standpoint would lead to a “double exclusion” in that there is no use in trying, since culture is inherited and not constructed. Schumann (1986) thinks that second language success depends on the degree of acculturation of the student. Hatoss (1994), on the other hand, argues that the adoption of the lifestyle and values of the target group is not necessary for successful acquisition of the target language. Others, like Phillipson (1992), want to abandon the native speaker as ideal or norm all together. Yet others, like Liddicoat and Crozet (1997), claim that we must find a third position between the target and “mother” cultures.

Here my connotations wander to the concept of “hybridity” often referred to in the field of literature. Hybridity has historically been associated with impurity. The hybrid (the result of mating between two different species) was seen as something tainted or contaminated. Jantjes (1998) and other postcolonial theorists want to elevate hybridity to something good: a space in which we engage in each other, a borderline that opens up to new possibilities, a meeting place. So maybe when it comes to the teaching of culture, the most important task for the teacher is to identifying the borderline, pointing to the gap between the self and the other, in order for understanding to take place. And with understanding or comprehension, comes the possibility for students to move back and forth between cultures, a skill that is increasingly important today in times of globalization and internationalization. And if we are able to adapt in behavior, and not necessarily in values, maybe this is enough for inter-cultural communication to take place?

On the other hand, it is tempting to agree with Quirk (1991), who would argue that the most important goal for the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is proficiency in a standard prestige variety, no matter what your mother culture or values might be, and that this is the only real chance to make oneself heard and for so called “counter articulation” to take place. Nevertheless Quirk’s (1991) argument
presupposes a view of human interaction that takes off in the clashes between people. For my part I hold a more positive view which sees interaction as an arena for empathy and the taking part in each others’ worlds, an empathy that makes us want to know more and learn from each other.

7.2 Implications
When it comes to the implications that this limited study might have for further research I see them as twofold. First, it has shed light on the field of textbook usage, of what is actually being used out there, of what students are exposed to. In the light of my findings it could be said that at least the most common textbook does fulfill a lot of the suggested criteria that determine whether a textbook is promoting cultural understanding, especially criteria posed in older research. On the other hand, it is worth noting that a large number of students are exposed to alternative materials that we know very little about. Therefore, it would be of interest to carry out a study on the teachers who do not use textbooks and find out what they use instead and make a similar analysis of that material. Since textbooks often cover a long period of time, a study of alternative material would require a continuous access to material, preferably as long as a school year. And as for the motivations behind the selection of different texts and material, a much deeper insight into the everyday life of the teacher would be necessary.

Secondly, it would be of great interest to study what the teachers actually do with the material at hand, regardless if it is Blueprint, some other textbook or alternative material. How is the material used, what is open for discussion, what is added, what is skipped over, what is left out? What does the teacher do in order to facilitate and encourage student reflection? These are all questions that are more closely related to the didactics field, and would be interesting to analyze in the light of theories on learning.
References

Primary Sources
Skolverket, 21 September, telephone interview with staff member.
Stockholm stads utbildningsförvaltning, 21 Sept 2007, telephone interview with administrator.

Secondary Sources


Appendix
Front pages of the most frequently used textbooks: