



The Relevance of Social Class:

A Content Analysis of EFL Coursebooks for Swedish Upper Secondary School

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Abstract

This study focuses on social class in Swedish EFL coursebooks. The aim is to investigate what different social classes are represented and how much space they are given, as well as how they are portrayed in three Swedish EFL coursebooks aimed at English 5 for upper secondary school. The selected coursebooks *Viewpoints 1*, *Blueprint A 3.0*, and *Pioneer 1* have been analyzed using qualitative content analysis, focusing on texts and images presented in the materials. The analysis emanates from Neo-Marxist theory in order to point to different social class conditions. The results show lower-, middle-, and upper-class representation to various degrees. Mostly the lower class and upper class are visible, while the middle class is underrepresented. The lower class, in most cases, is shown together with the upper class in exploitative circumstances. This is made apparent through the lower class, in most cases, lacking the ability to decide for themselves in relation to their upper-class counterparts. Further, this indicates that the upper class rules the world on behalf of the lower class. Meanwhile, when the middle class is shown, they are mainly depicted through overconsumption, and as victims of upper-class dominance. Despite previous research showing the importance of social class on a global, European and Swedish scale, the coursebooks somewhat disregard its importance in different texts and images.

Keywords: EFL Coursebooks, Social Class, Neo-Marxist Theory, Upper Secondary School

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1. Introduction

The concept of social class in educational policy has been given less importance over the last few decades. In a Swedish educational context, there is a large focus placed on other issues, even though social class is denoted as “the single most powerful determinant of life chances” (Nylund, 2012, pp. 591-592). This is demonstrated by the curriculum (Skolverket, 2022b) for Swedish upper secondary school, emphasizing perspectives regarding gender, ethics, and the environment. Despite the decreased emphasis on social class in educational policy, Nylund states (2012, p. 591) that the topic is still highly relevant in Swedish society. This is a consequence of social class being a foundational structure in every modern-day capitalist society. However, class acceptance still implicitly resonates with the norms and values of the Swedish curriculum, stating that “everyone who works in school should participate in developing the pupils’ feeling for unity, solidarity and responsibility for people outside the closest group” (Skolverket, 2022b, my translation). The importance of social class puts an increased need for awareness on teachers to choose appropriate teaching materials (Skela & Burazer, 2021, p. 383). This is further developed by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 337) who suggest that EFL (English as a foreign language) coursebooks may negatively affect pupils if they are unable to relate to the textual content. Hence, it is relevant to regard social class while examining EFL coursebooks. In consideration of its importance, the object of the present study is to investigate social classes in terms of their representation, how much space they are given, and how they are portrayed in Swedish EFL coursebooks.

2. Background

In the first part of the Background, definitions of coursebooks and social class will be covered in order to address their significance for the study. Furthermore, social class in relation to the English subject for upper secondary school will be presented. Lastly, previous research on the topic of coursebook analysis in relation to social class will be highlighted. The previous research accounts for international studies, due to a shortage of Swedish EFL coursebook analyses regarding social class. The studies accounted for emanates from cultural, gender, ethnic, and/or social class aspects. As stated by Kraus et al. (2017, p. 1), social class as a phenomenon is a part of other aspects of inequality. Consequently, social class will be the focal point of the previous research, but addressed in the context of other inequalities.

2.1 Coursebooks

According to Skela and Burazer (2021, p. 383), there are numerous definitions of the term coursebook. The *Macmillan Dictionary* (n.d.) defines a coursebook as “a book that is designed to be used in class by students taking a particular course of study”. This aligns with the study, utilizing coursebooks for the course English 5, directed at upper secondary school. Hence, the definition presented by *Macmillan Dictionary* (n.d.) will be applied in the present study to denote the term coursebook.

2.2 Social class

The Marxist definition of class can be found in the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* from 1848. To explain the concept of class, Marx emphasized the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, also known as the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie was defined by their ownership of the means of production, while the proletariat was defined by their employment. Meanwhile, the petit bourgeoisie referred to a class defined by a mixture of ownership and employment (Marx & Engels, 2020, pp. 4-5). According to Fraser and Wilde (2012, pp. 42-43) the terms bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie, and proletariat are referred to, in a modern-day context, as upper class, middle class, and lower class. Further, these social classes are still used in Neo-Marxist theory in the present time, while slightly modified. The term social class refers to socio-economic differences between

hierarchical groups. These differences are shown through unequal social and economic conditions, such as status and wage. Ultimately, the social and economic conditions affect each other and are interconnected (Fraser & Wilde, 2012, pp. 42-43). Hence, the term social class will be applied here for the different socio-economic conditions between the upper, middle, and lower class.

2.3 The relevance of social class on a Swedish, European, and global scale

According to Therborn (2018, pp. 15-16), Sweden has had an ongoing problem with inequality. The rich and the relatively poor have increased in relation to comparable Scandinavian countries. For example, Therborn (2018, p. 105) states that from 1991 to 2016, the number of people in relative poverty in Sweden increased from 7% to 16%. Meanwhile, there was an increase in wealth accumulation at the top. As stated by Therborn (2018, pp. 19-20), in 2017 the 187 Swedish billionaires owned approximately 48% of Sweden's GDP, resulting in a total of 2147 billion sek. Furthermore, (Therborn, 2018, p. 35) out of these 2147 billion, there are 43 billion that are untaxed and redistributed outside of Swedish borders. As a consequence of less public funding, the Swedish welfare system was negatively affected, causing further social class discrepancies for the equal right to similar quality of health care, elderly care, and education. This is further explained by Nylund (2012, pp. 593-594), stating that a person's class background has become increasingly important, affecting their potential choice of education and overall access to resources.

In a school context, social class has become increasingly crucial in terms of the pupils' performance (Therborn, 2018, p. 15). Approximately one-fourth of the average grades in school are likely to be attributable to differences in conditions associated with social class (2018, p. 19). Further, there has been an overall decrease in the national results compared to other countries according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). According to Therborn (2018, p. 17), the decline in results can be attributed to upper-class economic activities within charter schools, accumulating profit through taxpayers of lower- and middle-class backgrounds. Moreover, Therborn (2018, pp. 125-127) states that this has led to a larger educational divide in terms of a person's geographical location. In 2014 there were 130 areas of exclusion in Sweden affecting poorer municipalities where the unemployment rates were higher

and educational quality lower. Meanwhile, there were only seven areas of exclusion affecting richer municipalities where the unemployment rates were lower and educational quality higher. This aligns with Nylund (2012, pp. 593-594), stating that the socioeconomic conditions a person experiences correlate with their social class and where they live in Sweden.

According to Milanovic (2015, p. 459), there is a need for a global understanding of social class. In the aim section of the syllabus for English 5, it is stated that on a global scale, the English subject is supposed to give new perspectives of the world. Additionally, “societal questions and living conditions” should be addressed in areas where English is used (Skolverket, 2022a, my translation). From a European perspective, Bihagen et al. (2009, pp. 89-90) state that the social class differences in Europe are mainly related to conditional inequalities in aspects such as education, income, and social status. One significant example of inequality is undeclared work, causing a decrease in the overall quality of life for European workers (International Labour Organization, 2013, p. 58). Further, Milanovic (2015, p. 458) mentions that on a European and a global scale, “more than half of variability in income globally is explained by circumstances given at birth” (Milanovic, 2015, p. 458). The circumstances refer to a person's geographical and social location, which causes social and economic inequalities. Therefore, where a person is born is the main factor determining what social and economic conditions they experience (Milanovic, 2015, pp. 458-459).

The findings presented by Bihagen et al., Milanovic, and Therborn (2009; 2015; 2018), highlight issues with social class inequalities on a Swedish, European, and global level. In addition, the knowledge section in the curriculum for Swedish upper secondary school expresses a need for pupils to “assess events through a Swedish, European and global perspective” (Skolverket, 2022b, my translation). Due to its importance in education, social class should be addressed in a teaching and learning context for pupils to better understand its importance in contemporary societies (Nylund, 2012, p. 601). Further, its importance can be highlighted using EFL coursebooks, which are commonly used by teachers (Skela & Burazer, 2021, p. 383). Hence, social class is relevant, not only in the world, but in a teaching and learning context.

2.4 The representations and portrayals of social class in EFL coursebooks

In this section, three studies will be used to compare each result in relation to each other.

Initially, the research methods of the studies will be accounted for. The first study is a critical study by Arikan (2005, p. 31) on age, gender and social class in English language teaching (ELT) coursebooks. The method used was an analytical method that viewed the visual and textual depiction of social class. Second, in 2009, a study by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 334) analyzed culture and power in EFL textbooks for ethnic Mongols in China. The study made use of content analysis and looked at quantitative and qualitative aspects of power in relation to social class as depicted in the textbooks. Quantitatively, the approach was to determine which countries were included and excluded, and how social class was portrayed. Meanwhile, qualitatively the idea was to interpret the structural meanings of the texts. Lastly, in 2020, a study by Dos Santos and Windle (2020, p. 478) was published on race and class in relation to two working-class university students of English. The purpose was to interview the students in order to retrieve their interpretations and thoughts on content found in the global ELT textbooks *American English File* (AEF) 2 and 3 (Dos Santos & Windle, 2020, p. 474). However, it is important to note that the textbooks also were analyzed by the researchers in relation to the interviews.

The study by Arikan (2005, pp. 31-33) found that the overall representation of social class was connected to middle-class values and pictures, making the world seem middle class. A common portrayal was pictures of men in business suits attending different business meetings (Arikan, 2005, pp. 31-33). This portrayal partially aligns with the results provided by Dos Santos and Windle (2020, p. 474), showing that *AEF* 2 and 3 presented an occupational hierarchy that revolves around business people occupying the most prestigious positions. The *AEF* also emphasized the formal economy and middle-class professions. In this context, the formal economy refers to jobs and workers that are protected or regulated by the state. The middle-class professions are represented as structured career paths and academic endeavors. Moreover, the aspects of the formal economy are portrayed as accessible for everyone while disregarding the privilege of education and different material conditions (Dos Santos & Windle, 2020, pp. 484-485). The middle-class dominance is further emphasized by the qualitative data presented by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 334), showing that the middle class primarily controls the world, aligning with Arikan's (2005) findings. This is shown as the pictures and texts mainly

portrayed people of greater socio-economic status. For example, the main characters of the texts tend to study at international schools. However, in China, only middle-class or upper-middle-class families can afford to pay the fee. Further, the quantitative data shows that most dialogues, settings, and pictures represented middle-class or upper-class activities, such as ballet, traveling and piano lessons (Xiang & Yenika-Agbaw, 2019, pp. 334-335).

On the other hand, Arikan (2005, p. 31) states that the lower class is barely represented, while Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 334) explain that there is a complete absence of lower-class depictions in the coursebooks. Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 336), state that “lower-class people, such as migrant workers, are excluded and have no voice at all”. This is, e.g., highlighted by only showing the rich urban areas and ignoring the corresponding marginalization of the poor and under-developed rural areas. This shows that individuals from developed countries and societies with high socioeconomic status have additional decision-making, authority and power to speak, while the lower class is ignored. Arikan (2005, p. 37) further emphasizes the differences in upper- and lower-class depiction: “It is significant that the lowest classes and the marginal are invisible whereas celebrities and the rich are given as success stories”. However, the few times that the lower class is depicted, it is mainly shown through pictures of people being targets of poverty, powerlessness, and oppression. This depiction somewhat aligns with Dos Santos and Windle (2020, pp. 484-485), stating that the upper class is portrayed as happy and successful, while the working class is portrayed as unhappy due to being exploited in their manual labor. However, it is significant in Arikan’s (2005, p. 37) findings that no pictures in the coursebooks indicated that different social classes lived side by side. Instead, the emphasis was put on one social class in isolation.

In comparison to the studies provided by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019) and Dos Santos and Windle (2020), Arikan’s findings solely point to coursebooks indicating a lack of social class references, making the world seem classless at times (2005, p. 31). To further problematize social class in coursebooks, it is addressed by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 337) that the absence of suitable EFL textbooks about culture and power can negatively affect the educational outcomes of underrepresented groups and minorities. This has to do with textbook users being unable to relate the textual content to themselves because of their underrepresentation (Xiang & Yenika-Agbaw, 2019, p. 337). This ties back to Arikan (2005, p. 38) stating that there is a

problem with how aspects, such as social class, are distributed in the coursebooks. As an example, the lack of representation and negative portrayals of certain social classes are deemed problematic. The problems are associated with pupils being unable to relate to the content they consume and characterizing certain social classes as a stereotype. According to Arikan (2005, p. 31), this is of great importance, due to coursebooks having an impact on pupils' cognitive development and self-image. On the other hand, Dos Santos and Windle (2020, p. 489) show concern for ELT textbooks portraying inequality, while disregarding the impact of occupational hierarchies. The problem is that occupational hierarchies are degrading for workers, subjecting them to humiliation and obedience to the classes above. Despite this, Dos Santos and Windle (2020, pp. 475-476) claim that none of the ELT textbooks in the study present occupational hierarchies as a problem, and instead as a law of nature.

3. Aim and research questions

The aim is to investigate what different social classes are represented and how much space they are given, as well as how they are portrayed in three Swedish EFL coursebooks aimed at the English 5 course for upper secondary school. Based on this aim the following questions will be answered:

- What different social classes are represented and how much space are they given?
- How are the different social classes portrayed?

4. Method

The method of this study is content analysis with a qualitative approach. The analysis is based on an objective and systematic approach and can be used to find various characteristics within texts and images. The characteristics are expressed through meanings and concepts. As the analysis progresses, the researcher should become explicitly informed about the content of the texts (Neundorff, 2019, p. 2-3). It is through examining data in texts and images that the researcher can understand what the materials are trying to convey (Krippendorff, 2022, p. 3). Neundorff explains

that this can further be understood by categorizing the materials through different concepts (Neundorf, 2019, p. 21).

The method aligns with the investigation of the study. Qualitative content analysis has been used to examine what social classes are represented, and how much space they are given. Further, the analysis accounts for how the different social classes are portrayed. The research questions are addressed by the analysis of different texts and images, which provides data based on the categorization of different social classes. These categorizations are addressed by investigating the meanings and concepts within the texts and images provided in the EFL coursebooks. In this study, meanings refer to what a text or image is trying to tell the reader. Concepts refer to aspects such as “power” or “exploitation”.

In the present study, the textual and imagery evidence is not sufficient to draw any major conclusions. Instead, the results will be able to spot commonalities and differences in connection to previous research. Additionally, in order to fully understand the material, the texts and images in the EFL coursebooks are thoroughly examined. With regard to the scope of the study, the decision has been made to use a combination of more in-depth analysis, as well as shorter textual examples in order to provide adequate evidence for the study.

5. Material

The study’s material was selected based on the following factors: first, they were recommended by teachers in the vicinity of where the study was conducted. Second, they were easily accessible in the university library due to free access. The selection of three EFL coursebooks has been agreed upon as they prove to provide sufficient data for the aim of the study. Furthermore, the coursebooks investigated are all based on the English 5 course for upper secondary school. However, none of the coursebooks are published after the publication of the new syllabus (Skolverket, 2022a) for English 5. Lastly, the coursebooks are written by different authors, with the exception of Lundfall (2012, 2017). According to Skela and Burazer (2021, p. 384), this is likely to account for slight differences in content and structure, despite being based on the same curriculum and syllabus. Another aspect to consider is the different intentions and purposes carried out by the publishers of the coursebooks, possibly affecting the content of the material

(Frank et al., 2023, p. 3). In this study, *Viewpoints 1* is published by Gleerups, while *Blueprint A 3.0* and *Pioneer 1* are published by Liber.

5.1 Viewpoints 1

Viewpoints 1 is the second edition of this coursebook, designed for English 5 and written by Gustafsson and Wivast (2017). In total, the coursebook consists of 264 pages and 21 chapters. The coursebook is divided into five major topics, which contain four to five chapters from pages 1-207. The chapters focus on different skills, such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing in relation to different texts. In addition, there are vocabulary and/or grammar exercises toward the end of each chapter. However, from pages 208-262, there are chapters emphasizing grammar and different text types. These chapters, as well as the vocabulary and grammar exercises in the previous chapters, will be disregarded. This has to do with the chapters not being deemed to contain any textual or visual data regarding the topic of social class.

5.2 Blueprint A 3.0

Blueprint A 3.0 is the third edition of the coursebook. This too is aimed at English 5 and was written by Lundfall and Nyström (2017). The coursebook contains 328 pages and consists of seven chapters with different areas of focus. These areas are presented in different texts and connect to the skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. From pages 247-302 the “Blue Pages” start and contain grammar and vocabulary exercises. For the same reason as above, due to their lack of relevance to the study, the “Blue Pages” will be disregarded.

5.3 Pioneer 1

Pioneer 1 is the first edition of the coursebook. Like the previously described coursebooks, it is aimed at English 5, and written by Lundfall, Österberg, and Taylor (2012). In total, the coursebook consists of 292 pages and six chapters. These chapters are divided into different topics and contain a variety of texts connected to reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. From pages 242-257, there is a focus on different text types. Additionally, pages 258-291 focus on grammar and vocabulary training. These pages have not been deemed to contain any textual or visual data regarding the topic of social class and will therefore be ignored.

6. Theoretical approach

In this study, the theoretical approach of Neo-Marxism will be applied. The Neo-Marxist theory will be used to create definitions of the social classes, as well as point to different conditions and concepts of inequality, such as exploitation and capitalism. The coursebooks have been viewed from a Neo-Marxist perspective in order to identify different aspects of social class related to Neo-Marxist theory. First, the theory will be explained regarding its purpose. Second, definitions of the different social classes will be accounted for.

In comparison to Marxism, Neo-Marxism focuses on social class in a modern-day context. Social class may be said to determine an individual's quality of life (Muntaner et al., 2015, pp. 1-2). The social classes in focus will be the lower, middle, and upper classes, conventionally associated with research related to Marxism and sociology (Muntaner et al., p. 3). A coexisting feature of Neo-Marxism is that individuals can be placed into hierarchical groups based on their economic and social conditions, also known as social classes. The economic and social conditions which affect the social classes are often tied to ownership. For example, economic and social conditions may vary in accordance with whether you are an employer or an employee. Muntaner et al. (2015, pp. 4-5) also argue that social class is defined by what extent a business can accumulate profit, or how much work can pay. Consequently, the economic conditions a group experiences affect their different social conditions, and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to point out inequalities between the classes in order to distinguish the different conditions they experience.

In Neo-Marxist theory, social classes are a cause of capitalism (Muntaner et al. 2015, p. 1). McDonough and McMahon (2018, pp. 400-401) define capitalism as an economic and social system based on private ownership. However, capitalism also targets other institutions, such as the government being a pawn in capitalist expansion. Additionally, capitalism can be referred to as a system based on accumulating profit. The profit is gained through the generation of surplus, caused by a determined wage and profit rate. An example of an important discrepancy to consider is exploitation. Zwolinski et al. (2001, p. 1) refer to exploitation as laborers being "forced to sell their labor to capitalists for less than the full value of the commodities they produce with their labor". Furthermore, McDonough and McMahon (2018, pp. 399-401) state that capitalism is supposed to increase competition between companies. Although capitalism is

seen as a system based on competition, Marx argued that the capitalist system typically creates a concentration of wealth at the top, causing capitalists to become increasingly powerful by consuming less profitable companies (Fraser & Wilde, 2012, p. 21). Another aspect to consider within capitalism is the debt market, causing financial gains to be made through commitments to pay cash in the future in exchange for cash today (McDonough & McMahon, 2018, p. 403).

In accordance with the Neo-Marxist theoretical explanation of social class, presented by Muntaner et al. (2015), the following definitions will be used in the content analysis: the lower class will be defined as people with either no or low social status, and/or with low or no economic status, often manual workers or homeless people. The middle class will be defined as either people with average or semi-high social status and/or with average to semi-high economic status, often white-collar workers or owners of small businesses. Lastly, the upper class will be defined as people, companies, or institutions of high or very high social status and/or with high or very high economic status.

7. Results and analysis

To show the representation and portrayal of the different social classes, this segment will be divided into three parts, covering the three different coursebooks. First, the findings on the representations of different social classes and how much space they are given in the coursebook will be covered. Representation is concerned with what social classes are shown, while the space they are given is focused on to what extent they are shown. Subsequently, how the different social classes are portrayed will be accounted for. Due to representations and portrayals of social class as well as the amount of space they are given being closely connected, the decision has been made to include them under the same subheading. Additionally, each text and imagery will be fully accounted for to highlight the social classes in focus. Each social class presented in the coursebook will be shown, if visible. This will be shown in different paragraphs primarily focusing on one class. However, the classes can be presented together in the same contexts and cannot, therefore, be excluded from each other.

7.1 Representations and portrayals of social class in *Viewpoints 1*

Overall, the representation of social classes in *Viewpoints 1* is apparent, but rarely the target of a text. In other words, there may be elements of social class in a story, but it is not what is generally the focal point. Instead, social class is included in issues concerning gender, culture, and ethnicity. Evidently, there are texts throughout the coursebook, and a chapter primarily concerned with teenage love (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 44-70) where social class is absent. However, social class is presented in parts of the coursebook, mainly shown through texts depicting individuals and groups from lower-class conditions. An example of this is a text that portrays two child assassins who are “frequently hired by drug barons” to commit crimes (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 145-147). Another example is a text about a boy who lives in an area affected by poverty and theft (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 177-184). Further, the lower class is portrayed through manual labor, as shown in the text “The Transformation of Cindy” (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 104-117). In this text, the upper class is used in context with the lower class, which is a common feature throughout the coursebook.

The text is written as a modernized version of Cinderella and portrays the lower class through the perspective of the main character Cindy. The lower-class working conditions can be seen in a picture that shows Cindy on her knees, cleaning the floor from a submissive position, while being watched by her superior who is positioned above her (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 104). Although Cindy and her superior who is also a restaurant employee are both lower class, there is a difference in power. As the story continues, Cindy is concerned with belonging to the upper class. This is first shown by Cindy wanting to make a purchase: “For one thing she doesn’t have the money; for another, she doesn’t like painted porcelain statues” (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 107). Despite Cindy not wanting the item, the upper-class experience of material possessions attracts her. Further on in the story, there is an image of Cindy and her romantic interest Jeff dancing together wearing upper-class clothes made of glittery fabric (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 112). Once more, material possession is emphasized by Cindy escaping her previous lower-class life through material acquisition. Lastly, at the end of the story, Cindy has escaped her lower-class life. This is expressed by Cindy’s refusal to cooperate with the people above her: “I’m out of the picture ... mend your own dress ... make your own posters ... sweep your own floors!”. In this instance, the power relation between the lower and upper class is eliminated. As a result, “The Transformation of Cindy” reveals a class journey away from the lower class.

As a result of the coursebook making use of more lower-class focused texts, the middle class is given less space. However, when the middle class is shown it is mainly in the text "The Big Spender" (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 165-170). In the text (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 165), the main character Rebecca is in debt due to overspending as a consequence of wanting to impress her surroundings. Rebecca is depicted as a journalist for a financial magazine. Despite her job title being portrayed as successful in the sense of making a decent amount of money, she argues that "No one who writes about personal finance ever meant to do it" (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 169). This is stated in the context of Rebecca wanting higher middle-class journalist jobs in other more prestigious magazines. Furthermore, because Rebecca is in an economically tense situation due to her debt, she looks for a promotion from her editor Philip and gets denied (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 170). This sequence shows that Philip is hierarchically above Rebecca in the company by being able to deny her promotion. Regardless of Rebecca being middle class, she is vulnerable in relation to the capitalist economic system around her. The story shows the potential dangers of capitalist society through the ability to borrow money. Also, it depicts the willingness of a middle-class individual to gain social status through material means. To conclude, "Big Spender" depicts the potential dangers of being middle class in relation to materialistic obsession.

As mentioned previously, the upper class is only used in context with the lower class. Unlike the other social classes being shown through different professions or lifestyles, the upper class is mainly shown through a desire for material possessions as highlighted in "The Transformation of Cindy". However, different upper-class, as well as lower- and middle-class depictions can be found in the text "Freedom Fighter or Terrorist" (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 33-36), which is the only text in the coursebook that includes all three social classes.

The text captures the militant suffragettes during the start of the 1900s. There is a clear opposition between the lower and middle class, the women, and the upper class, the government. This is first expressed through the perspective of women joining together in a class formation, a collective pursuit of class interest, to fight for their rights: "They cut telephone wires, burned down the houses of politicians and prominent members of society, set cricket pavilions alight and carved slogans into golf courses" (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 34). This sequence shows that the violence of the lower class is directed against upper-class property. The property is

synonymous with different upper-class activities at that time, such as cricket and golf. As the text progresses, it is shown that women are also treated differently depending on their social and economic capital: “In 1918 the British parliament recognised the contribution of women to the war effort by giving the vote to women older than 30 who also owned some property” (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 34). Hence, there is variation between the female members of the lower class and middle class based on age and capital. Furthermore, the picture (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 35) used in the text shows women on a horse carriage holding posters, standing firm and looking proud. In connection, the lower class and middle class in the text is for the most part positively depicted as a civil rights movement. However, violence against the property of the upper class is still argued for and against: “The destruction of property caused loss of money and inconvenience, but no serious harm to the public” (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 36). In conclusion, the text addresses whether the actions of the lower class are “morally justified” against the upper class (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 36).

7.2 Representations and portrayals of social class in *Blueprint A 3.0*

The representations of different social classes in *Blueprint A 3.0* vary throughout the coursebook. In contrast to *Viewpoints 1*, where social class is scattered throughout different pages of the coursebook, the focus on a particular social class is mainly determined by the chapter. For example, in a chapter containing texts about marketing, the focus is mainly placed on the upper class. This is shown through upper-class activities such as celebrity sponsorships (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 56-84). Meanwhile, a chapter addressing racism is mainly concerned with the lower class. This is demonstrated through lower-class activities, such as manual labor (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 204-243). Despite the emphasis in a chapter being put on a specific social class, other social classes are also involved, but not the point of focus. However, there are texts involving social class that are unaffected by their respective chapter and that are scattered throughout the coursebook. These texts are concerned with lower-class representation. For example, the text “Girl Asserts Right to Her Own Life” focuses on topics such as poverty and female rights (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 103-105). Another example is the text “Conversations about home (at a deportation centre)” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 170-172), which emphasizes refugees in poor social and economic situations. Similar to *Viewpoints 1*, the representation of social classes is not always the main target of a text. Rather, it is involved in

texts relating to gender, ethnicity, and culture. When social class is presented, it is mainly shown through the upper and lower class. This is comparable to *Viewpoints 1*, which gives the middle class little space in comparison to the other classes. Further, there are chapters and texts which completely or almost lack references to social class. Even though these chapters could contain social class, they solely focus on topics such as socialization (Lundfall & Nyström, pp. 6-17) and climate change (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 18-50).

In the chapter titled “Dragon’s Den” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 56-57) the subheading includes words such as “entrepreneurs”, “customers” and “brands”. The emphasis of this chapter is put on an upper-class perspective of ownership and of people of greater socioeconomic status. An example of this is an image in the chapter showing the economically successful celebrity Beyoncé collaborating with the multinational corporation Pepsi. Onwards, the text “Selling the Devil” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 60) shows the potential aspirations of the devil wanting to turn Hell into Disneyland. In this text, the devil is portrayed as a greedy upper-class villain with ambitions to further his economic and social status. An example of this is when the devil refers to different corporations as inspiration for creating an advocacy campaign to improve his social status. “The oil companies do it. The tobacco companies do it. The chemical companies do it. I want to do it” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 61). In this instance, the upper class is depicted as an inspiration to further increase social capital. Furthermore, the devil is concerned with self-promotion to further increase economic profit and social status: “I want to be on the TV, on radio, in all the big magazines. Time, Playboy, Newsweek, Ladies Home Journal. All of ‘em” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 62). In the text, various references favor a prestigious, celebrity-like, upper-class life. Furthermore, different companies and upper-class magazines are mentioned as points of economic and social success.

On the other hand, the lower and middle classes are underrepresented in the chapter. This trend continues, showing commercial companies promoting famous artists and movie productions (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 66). For example, the beer brand Heineken paid “45 million for a product placement in the James Bond movie Skyfall” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 67). It is only at the very end of the chapter that the text “Going Too Far for Gold” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 80) addresses the lower class in relation to the middle class. In this text, Vice President John is an executive for a branch at the company Nike. John talks about the potential use of

lower-class kids to further increase the company's financial gains: "We take out ten customers, make it look like ghetto kids ... I bet we shift our inventory within twenty-four hours" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 82). This sequence shows that the lower class is used as a tool to increase economic capital. It also suggests that the middle class is responsible for exploiting the lower class. However, this could alternatively be seen as the middle class executing the duties of the upper class, in this case, for the transnational company Nike. Almost in its entirety, the chapter "Dragon's Den" focuses on upper-class economic and social activities while barely addressing the middle and lower classes. Furthermore, if the lower class is presented, it appears to be mainly seen as an asset to further profit.

In the chapter "Black Lives Matter", the portrayal of African Americans as part of an oppressed lower class is the focus point. At the start of the chapter, (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 206) images of African American servants and workers are shown in relation to their upper-class counterparts, the white people. An example of this is a picture of African American children, women, and men doing manual labor on a cotton plantation, kneeling with a crouched posture, and wearing cheap farmer clothes. In contrast, white upper-class men are counting money, standing with a straight posture, and wearing fancy attire. The discrepancy between the upper and lower classes is notable in the way they are positioned, by what they wear, and through the tasks they perform. The start of the chapter also includes a chronological timeline of the history of African Americans. As an example, from 1861 to 1865 it is stated that southern states were "dependent on slavery for their economy" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 206). This shows that African Americans are at the bottom of the lower class being entitled to no economic or social standards.

Furthermore, in 1896 it is explained that African Americans were targeted by the U.S. Supreme Court causing the justification for "segregation of all public facilities" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 206). As history progresses, African Americans are still restricted in terms of their social mobility, being unable to associate with the other classes. Extensively, the exploitation of the lower class is apparent throughout the timeline. Onwards the timeline stops at the year 2013. In 2013, according to the book, it is written that "cases of racial profiling leads to several young African American men being shot and killed by white police officers" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 209). This shows that the social struggles of the African American population are still

present. This adamant ongoing social class discrepancy is later shown through statistics relating to educational and living standards, “The unemployment rate for black high-school dropouts is 47% (for white high-school dropouts it is 26%) ... Black people make up just 13.2% of the US population, they account for 37% of the homeless” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 235). This shows that, socially and economically, African Americans are in an unfavorable situation in comparison to the overall white population of the US. Consequently, African Americans are shown through a historical and present perspective of oppression in relation to the other classes.

7.3 Representations and portrayals of social class in *Pioneer 1*

In *Pioneer 1*, social class is shown to various degrees in all chapters, except chapter 3, which mainly focuses on human consciousness (Lundfall et al., 2012, pp. 70-97). Also, no chapter has a strict focus on only social class. Instead, the chapters often encompass topics such as climate change and culture. Social class is visible in certain texts throughout most chapters, which is unlike *Blueprint A 3.0*, where a chapter mostly targets a specific class. Further, the representation of different social classes mainly targets the upper and lower classes, while the middle class is almost entirely ignored. The upper class is shown in different texts. One example can be found in a text about a wealthy man seen “counting all his money in front of his maid and his butler” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 103). Another example of the upper class can be found in a text called “Body Language” regarding President George W. Bush visiting Australians (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 67). The president is also presented together with Hillary Clinton in the text “A Rare Beetle – Withus Oragainstus” where the attacks on 9/11 are elaborated on (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 44). The commonality in both texts is that the common people are disregarded while the emphasis is placed on the politicians in power.

The upper class is also shown through successful symbols such as Michelangelo and Beethoven. This is presented in a text about who a person aspires to become: “You may become a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 8). This can be connected to the title of the coursebook *Pioneer 1*. According to *Collins Dictionary* (n.d.), the word “pioneer” either refers to someone who has discovered a particular area or someone who invents something new. Accordingly, some chapters begin with an introduction referencing quotes from a pioneer of a specific field. Examples include successful astronaut Neil

Armstrong (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 137), and famous painter Pablo Picasso (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 37). Meanwhile, any usage of lower-class pioneers or professions is neglected in the introductions of the chapters. This has to do with the introductions mainly emphasizing celebrities and/or professions of high socio-economic status.

On the other hand, the lower class is showcased through the perspective of homeless people, people from underdeveloped areas, and exploited workers. For example, the text “Operation Mincemeat” follows a homeless alcoholic man in the Second World War (Lundfall, et al., 2012, pp. 19-21). Another example can be found in the text “Isang Litrong Liwang” (Lundfall, et al., pp. 208-210) that presents lower class people in substandard housing without electricity. Further, exploited workers are presented in the text, “Maximum Effort – Minimum Wage”, which revolves around journalist Barbara Ehrenreich who tries different low-paying jobs. The emphasis of the text is put on the working conditions of the lower class. Firstly, the title addresses the conditions of exploitation (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 57). In other words, exploitation refers to laborers being taken advantage of to work for less than they are supposed to earn in relation to their labor (Zwolinski et al., 2001, p. 1). Hence, the title shows the duality of the laborer being paid the minimum amount for their high effort.

As the text progresses, the lower class is shown through a picture of a woman cleaning the floor (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 57). What is notable is that the woman is bent forward, wearing scrubs, while cleaning the office floor. This shows that the woman is cleaning the property of the social classes above her. A similar portrayal can be found in *Viewpoints I* in the text “The Transformation of Cindy”, where the main character Cindy is portrayed cleaning the floor in a submissive position while being monitored by her superior (Lundfall et al., 2017, p. 104). As the text develops, jobs such as “folding clothes”, “waitressing” and “factory work” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 57) are mentioned. According to Ehrenreich, these are “tough jobs with miserable rates of pay” (Lundfall et al., p. 58). As a result, the text captures the economic and social difficulties of the lower class in relation to their labor.

In the text, “The Next Super Consumer – 8 Signs”, China is used as an example to explain the potential dangers of consumerism. The text depicts the upper, middle, and lower classes through references to capitalist consumption. First, the text shows people queuing outside an H&M store, “waiting for designer items by Italian fashion label Marni to go on sale” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p.

193). This shows that the upper class, in this case, the transnational companies H&M and Marni are cooperating and that the other classes are consuming. Further, the evidence of middle-class portrayal can be found in a text bubble relating to the picture, where the text explains that “state planners forecast that half the population in China will be middle class by 2020” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 193). Hence, the text further shows that as wealth increases, people will be able to consume more. In other words, as people experience a class journey from lower class to middle class, their consumption habits change, due to the increase in economic capital.

As the text progresses, it is stated that before people became wealthier, the people of China were living “within the planet’s means” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 193). This indicates that the growing middle class has a negative impact on the earth. Meanwhile, China used to be climate neutral while it remained mostly lower class and did not take part in capitalist activities. Therefore, it can be argued that the text addresses the potential dangers of the middle-class lifestyle. Lastly, the text points to the connection between the upper and middle classes. “China is on a shopping spree – and they are going global. Chinese companies are buying companies, land factories in every part of the world” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 195). In this sequence, it is hinted that the middle class supports the expansion of the capitalist upper class. Through middle-class overconsumption, the Chinese upper class can globally expand their capital, buying companies and factories, and owning the means of production. Furthermore, this also constitutes an increase in lower-class jobs: “KFC has 2,000 outlets in 400 Chinese cities and employs 200,000 people” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 194). Conclusively, the text argues that as the upper class and middle classes expand, so do the lower-class jobs.

In the poem “The Queen & The Soldier”, a soldier confronts the queen. The power dynamic between the lower-class soldier and the upper-class queen is apparent throughout the text. This unequal power relation is first shown through the soldier’s point of view, “I’ve watched your palace up here on the hill. And I’ve wondered who’s the woman for whom we all kill” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 52). In this context, the palace is a symbol of the hierarchical distance between the queen and the soldier. The palace is also a symbol of economic and social wealth. Additionally, “For whom we all kill” shows that the lower class is overruled by the queen’s position in power. Hence, it is shown that the lower class serves the queen. As a result, the lower-class soldiers lack the agency to decide whether they want to obey the queen. The display of upper-class power is

further shown towards the end of the poem. “Out in the distance her order was heard. And the soldier was killed, still waiting for her word.” (Lundfall et al., 2012, p. 53). In this instance, the queen’s power is shown through her ability to eliminate the lower class. “The distance” implies that someone else executes the soldier for the queen. This further shows that the queen has other people from the lower classes under her control. Consequently, any opposition is removed, and the agency of the lower class is hindered by the power of the upper class.

7.4 Summary of the results and analysis

The investigated coursebooks indicate commonalities and differences between each other. First, the coursebooks include chapters, as well as texts and images where social class is absent. Chapters concerning climate change, teenage love, and human consciousness all ignore social class. Also, different texts and images throughout the coursebook disregard social class. Second, there is little space given to the middle class compared to the other classes in terms of representation. However, when the middle class is shown it is primarily shown through suffragettes and consumerism. Much like the lower class, the middle class is shown to be submissive to the upper class. Third, the upper and lower class can be found in isolation but are mainly used in the same textual contexts. The upper class in relation to the lower class is portrayed in a position of power and through the means of material possession. Meanwhile, the lower class is mainly shown in exploitative and oppressive circumstances, often striving towards upper-class life. In isolation, the upper class is shown as celebrities and pioneers of certain fields as indicated in *Blueprint A 3.0* and *Pioneer 1*. In contrast, the lower class is depicted in isolation as targets of poverty, homelessness, and exploitation.

8. Discussion

This section is divided into two parts. First, the results will be situated within previous research. Second, the results will be discussed from the perspective of teaching and learning. Finally, concluding words regarding the study, as well as considerations on potential studies for future research will be addressed.

8.1 Connection to previous research

The results may be said to corroborate as well as refute the findings of previous research. Unlike the findings of Arikan (2005, p. 37), claiming that social classes are used in isolation in coursebooks, the results show that all the investigated coursebooks used the lower class and upper class in the same textual contexts. However, the portrayal of the lower class somewhat relates to Arikan's findings (2005, p. 38), indicating a strong relationship between the portrayal of the lower class through poverty, as well as oppression. Furthermore, the results indicate that the coursebooks often portray the hardships of the lower class in a position of exploitation in manual labor. This correlates with the study by Dos Santos and Windle (2020, p. 478), which showed that the lower class is portrayed as unhappy due to being exploited in manual labor. On the other hand, the results contradict the study by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019), in whose material the lower class lacks representation. Instead, the lower class is represented to a large extent in all coursebooks in comparison to the other social classes but are negatively portrayed in comparison to their upper-class counterparts, thereby confirming the findings of Arikan (2005) and Dos Santos and Windle (2019).

Unlike the studies by Arikan (2005), Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019), and Dos Santos and Windle (2019), where the middle class is the focal point, the results show that the middle class is given little space in all the coursebooks. Instead, the relationship between the upper class and the lower class is highlighted. Unlike the study by Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 335), where the middle class is portrayed as controlling the world, the investigated coursebooks suggest that the upper class is given the primary role of power. This is highlighted in texts and images in *Blueprint A 3.0* and *Pioneer 1*, showing the upper class in a position of socio-economic power while making decisions not only for the world but on behalf of the lower class. However, there are instances of texts and images in *Viewpoints 1* and *Blueprint A 3.0*, that allow the lower class agency to make their own decisions in relation to the upper class. Despite this, the lower class is generally depicted as lacking the agency to determine their own lives. This aligns with Arikan (2005), stating that the lower class is presented as powerless, and Dos Santos and Windle (2019), indicating that the resources of the lower class are expropriated by the classes above. Additionally, in *Blueprint A 3.0* it is shown that the resources are expropriated by business people and celebrities, which can be further connected to the upper-class occupational findings

presented by Arikan (2005) and Dos Santos and Windle (2019). Lastly, all coursebooks show occupational hierarchies as something negative to various degrees, through the portrayal of racism, sexism, and exploitation. This refutes Dos Santos and Windle (2020, pp. 475-476), claiming that the EFL textbooks did not present occupational hierarchies as problematic.

8.2 Implications for teaching and learning

The school has a duty in relation to the pupils to evoke solidarity and unity for people outside the closest group (Skolverket, 2022b, own translation). However, in all three coursebooks investigated, the middle class lacks representation and is overshadowed by the upper and lower classes. Hence, a large socio-economic group of people is underrepresented. Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019, p. 337) state that this can lead to coursebook users being unable to relate the textual content to themselves. As a result, this can negatively impact the educational outcomes of the affected group. Moreover, as stated by Nylund (2012, p. 592), social class is the most powerful determinant of life chances. Despite this, the coursebooks display a lack of concern for social class in texts and images. This correlates with Arikan's findings (2005, p. 31), stating that coursebooks often make the world seem classless. Although, previous research points to the impact of social class inequalities on a global, European, and Swedish scale (Bihagen et al., 2009; Milanovic, 2015; Therborn, 2018). Moreover, when social class is shown, it is often shown through the lower class being exploited by the upper class. As referred to by Arikan (2005, p. 38), potential negative portrayals of social classes can be problematic in relation to coursebook users characterizing certain social classes with stereotypes. As a result, considering the syllabus for English 5, as well as previous research, there can be implications for teachers using the coursebooks while trying to address social phenomena and conditions (Skolverket, 2022a, own translation). This is an effect of the underrepresentation of the middle class, a lack of space given to the social classes, and negative portrayals of the lower class.

8.3 Concluding words

The Swedish EFL coursebooks *Viewpoints 1*, *Blueprint A 3.0*, and *Pioneer 1*, aimed at English 5 for upper secondary school mainly portray the upper and lower class, while almost entirely ignoring the middle class. The materials show the lower class in exploitative circumstances, being targets of the unequal power relations often caused by the upper class. Furthermore, the

agency of the lower class is almost entirely ignored. Meanwhile, the upper class is portrayed as the most powerful in society as shown through their dominant position in relation to the lower and middle class. Moreover, through portions of the coursebooks, the topic of social class is entirely ignored. This is problematic considering the importance of social class, not only on a global level, but also in Swedish society, specifically. To further investigate this topic, it would be interesting to interview teachers on their views of social class in Swedish EFL coursebooks for upper secondary school. This could be an asset to the research field, showing how or if teachers consider social class while using coursebooks in the classroom.

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