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Communication*

Cultural Discourse in Swedish ELT Textbooks:

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Global
North and Global South Cultures in Swedish Upper
Secondary ELT Textbooks

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Abstract

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This qualitative study aims to examine the representation of various English-speaking cultures in the English 5 ELT textbooks *Echo 5*, *Viewpoints 1*, *Core English 1*, *Progress Gold A*, *Blueprint A* and *Traction Blue*, used in Swedish upper secondary schools. The study explores and compares the representation of Global North and Global South cultures by identifying what themes are associated with Global North and Global South cultures. The study utilizes content analysis and critical discourse analysis in order to identify themes in the content and discuss how the content and language in these themes facilitate a particular cultural discourse. The findings of the study illustrate a significant distinction between the incorporated themes. They suggest that the representation of Global South cultures is depicted in an unfavorable manner due to themes that highlight the flawed nature of their cultures. Meanwhile, the representation of Global North cultures is characterized by themes that portray experiences relatable to the pupils and demonstrate the favorable elements of Global North cultures. This study therefore concludes that the distinctive themes that represent the Global North and Global South result in a discourse of cultural inequality and cultural inferiority since the ELT textbooks include themes that highlight the shortcomings and flaws of Global South cultures. Consequently, the results of the study illustrate that this discourse provides a limited representation of cultures, which could affect the pupils' ability to develop a nuanced understanding of other cultures in comparison to their own.

Keywords: Sweden, ELT textbooks, culture, representation, Orientalism

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Introduction

The expansion of English escalated in the mid-twentieth century and English was adopted as an official or semi-official language by numerous newly independent states that had formerly been part of the British Empire. The subsequent shift in the status of English and its new role as a “global language” (Crystal, 2012, p. 29) have therefore resulted in the emergence of a vast number of English-speaking cultures all over the world. This shift has promoted an objection to the concept of native-speaker culture in English language teaching and learning. The objection to this concept is situated in the notion that it is insufficient to expose language learners to monocultural language teaching (Arshad et al., 2020, p. 127). Thus, language learners must be exposed to a vast number of English-speaking cultures, which English language teaching (ELT) textbooks can facilitate.

It is difficult to deny that textbooks play an instrumental role in facilitating comprehension of language for pupils in an ELT context. The textbooks provide the pupils with linguistic knowledge and enable them to gain insight into other cultures. According to Vali (2015, p. 47), culture is a central aspect of language and ELT textbooks should therefore portray other cultures than the ones in which the learners are situated. This is essential since textbooks can influence the pupils’ attitudes and beliefs regarding different socio-cultural aspects, such as religion and social groups (Vali, 2015, p. 47). Hence, it is relevant to ascertain to what extent the ELT textbooks that are utilized provide the pupils with nuanced representations of cultures other than their own.

Previous research has been concerned with investigating the representation of different English-speaking countries in ELT textbooks. For instance, multiple studies (Mohamad, 2014; Thomas, 2017; Yuen, 2011) have identified a comparable pattern in their corresponding ELT textbooks. This study is motivated by an absence of previous research that discusses what characterizes the representations of both Global North and Global South cultures and what potential cultural discourse these representations may contribute to. It is further evident that the subsequent cultural discourse needs to be further discussed in connection to the Gyll curriculum due to its emphasis on knowledge about various cultural elements of English-speaking countries that facilitate the pupils’ ability to engage

in various social and cultural situations and participate in a globalized world (Skolverket, 2021). This study is therefore concerned with examining what cultural elements of English-speaking cultures are incorporated in six English 5 ELT textbooks and discern if there is a noticeable difference between how Global North and Global South cultures are represented.

Background

This section contains explanations of concepts and terms that are central to this study. Moreover, it discusses the aim and findings of similar studies that have been conducted within the scholarly field and how they relate to the aim of this present study.

Culture as a concept and cultural aspects

One way of defining culture according to Vali (2015, p.48) is “the everchanging values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors, which can be a common history, geographic location, language, social class and/or religion”. Moreover, culture is recognized as a feature through which people can express and characterize themselves and is shared with other members of society (Vali, 2015, p. 48). In contrast to society and its formalized institutions, culture is not necessarily formalized. It is characterized as the shared knowledge, beliefs and practices, which enable people to enjoy and understand the human experience (Poepsel, 2018, p. 3). There are numerous frameworks and methods to differentiate cultures depending on the academic field in which they are discussed. As will be illustrated later in this study, many researchers and authors differentiate between Western and non-Western cultures. However, this framework is primarily rooted in language use and geography (Quam & Campbell, 2023, p. 3). Since this study is more concerned with social, geopolitical and historical aspects, the terms Western and non-Western cultures will only be included when referring to previous research, when applicable.

One frequently utilized framework that will be the basis for the cultural distinction in this study, is the cultural distinction between the “Global South” and the “Global North”. The terms are frequently utilized in social studies and in international politics to facilitate the description of “global divisions and to group together countries with common positions on global issues “(Brooke-Holland, 2024). Moreover, Global South and Global North became prevalent among various academic fields after the Cold War and the terms were applied by researchers since they provided an alternative to the concept of globalization. More importantly, the terms were utilized to contest the belief of a more unified world (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 12).

The Global South functions as more than a metaphor for underdevelopment. The term refers to the history of colonialism and the differential economic and social change that has resulted in inequalities in living standards and access to resources (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13). The term “Global South” encompasses concepts of “Third World” and “Periphery”, broadly referring to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It particularly alludes to areas outside Europe and North America, many of which are characterized by lower income levels and varying degrees of political and cultural marginalization (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 12). In contrast to the Global South, the term “Global North” is often used interchangeably with developed countries. This stems from the historically perceived trajectory of Western advancement and as a result has redefined concepts such as “Europe” and the “West” into the “Global North” (Sundberg, 2009, p. 638). The Global North therefore refers to Europe and its settler societies, for example the United States, Canada and Australia (Sundberg, 2009, p. 638). It also includes any region that identifies itself as the recipient or inheritor of European culture, values and political and economic systems. However, although Latin America and the Caribbean were colonized by Europe, they are rarely regarded as a part of the West (Sundberg, 2009, p. 638).

Related to the notion of cultural divide, research has been conducted that examines cultures based on shared knowledge, beliefs and practices. One crucial study was conducted by Kachru (1992), who wished to examine the spread of English and provide a sociolinguistic classification of English-speaking cultures. Thus, he constructed three concentric circles based on the use of English in different cultures. According to Kachru (1992, p. 3), the first concentric circle, the *inner circle*, includes for instance USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The second circle, the *outer circle*, consists of former British colonies such as India, Malawi, Nigeria and Singapore and other countries where English is not the native language (Kachru, 1992, p. 3). Lastly, the *expanding circle* includes nations that recognize English as an important international language and consider English as the primary foreign language (Kachru, 1992, p. 3). However, Kachru’s classification of English-speaking cultures is primarily relevant to the previous research that will be presented. This study instead utilizes the distinction made previously between Global North and Global South cultures since the study is more concerned with the traditional distinction based on political, historical and social aspects, rather than the distinction rooted in language use. The study therefore utilizes Global North and Global South cultures

as the cultural framework in order to facilitate the aim of the study, which requires a clear categorization of cultures that examines political, historical and social aspects in texts.

Since this study is concerned with analyzing textbooks used in ELT classrooms, the study is situated within a school context, which consists of pupils from various cultural backgrounds. It is therefore crucial to emphasize that the concept of culture in a classroom may differ from other situations where culture is viewed differently. In relation to culture, the curriculum emphasizes the requirement that the pupils must acquire the ability to live with and realize that the world they live in is culturally diverse. Moreover, school should be viewed as a social and cultural venue, which has the opportunity and responsibility to enhance this ability in everybody who participates (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1). Additionally, according to the syllabus for English 5, the aim of the subject is to provide the pupils with knowledge that facilitates their ability to engage in various social and cultural situations and participate in a globalized world (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1). Moreover, it also states that education shall provide the pupils with the opportunity to develop an understanding of living conditions, societal issues and cultural conditions in areas where English is spoken (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1). Through the various definitions of culture mentioned above it is evident that the term is characterized as shared experiences, social issues, knowledge, beliefs and languages.

Previous research regarding the representation of cultures in ELT textbooks

As will be illustrated in this section, many researchers have been interested in the aspect of representation, which could be connected to various philosophers and their theories that have prompted debates regarding the nature of representation and how it is utilized (Prendergast, 2000, pp. 2-8). The field of study regarding cultural representation is therefore extensive. The previous research that will be discussed has incorporated an analytical framework that compares Western and non-Western cultures in regard to representation. Although previous research has utilized a different cultural framework, the following research is relevant to include and discuss in this present study due to the similarities in method, material and theory.

Some previous studies (Mohamad, 2014; Thomas, 2017) are situated in postcolonial practices and have been concerned with investigating the colonial influence in

contemporary representations of non-Western cultures, especially in ELT textbooks. Influenced by Said's theory regarding Orientalism, Mohamad (2014) and Thomas (2017) have examined the presence of cultural representations that derive from colonial practices, which aim to promote a binary opposition between the familiar West and the strange East (Said, 2003, p. 43). For instance, Thomas (2017) investigated the portrayal of non-Western cultures in four Norwegian ELT textbooks by employing a postcolonial theoretical framework. Ultimately, the findings of the study revealed a consistent pattern regarding the representation of characters from non-Western backgrounds. In correlation to this pattern, Thomas (2017) highlights the presence of Orientalism in the ELT textbooks due to depictions of the "racialized Other". Similarly, Mohamed (2014) has examined the influence of Orientalism in English language textbooks used in Libyan secondary schools. The study incorporates a postcolonial discourse analysis in order to identify and analyze language and images that signify views central to Orientalism. The study indicated that the ELT textbooks contain a substantial degree of stereotypical images and structures of non-Western cultures, particularly regarding 'the Orient'.

Similarly, numerous international studies regarding the depiction of Western and non-Western cultures have been conducted in order to examine to what extent Western and non-Western cultures are represented in ELT textbooks and in what nature. For instance, Yuen (2011) examined how foreign cultures are presented in English language textbooks used by Hong Kong secondary schools. Notably, Yuen (2011, p. 458) found that the representations favored cultures of English-speaking countries in the West. Moreover, the study concluded that the representation of Asia and Africa highlighted cultural customs but primarily consisted of descriptions of poverty in the regions (Yuen, 2011, p. 463).

Lastly, other studies (Lindqvist & Soler, 2022; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020) have investigated cultural representation in ELT textbooks and have analyzed to what extent the three concentric circles of English have been included. The studies concluded that there is an imbalance in the representation of the concentric circles in ELT textbooks. Tajeddin and Pakzadian (2020) have studied the representation of different varieties of English and different cultures in three global language teaching textbooks. The textbooks were subjected to content analysis regarding their references to Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles' English language varieties and their associated cultural contents. The conclusion of the study was that ELT textbooks predominantly represent Inner Circle cultural and

social values. Similarly, Lindqvist and Soler (2022) have performed a content analysis on a selection of Swedish ELT textbooks for upper secondary schools in order to examine how speakers of different varieties of English are represented. The findings of their study suggest that speakers of the standard varieties of Inner Circle countries are portrayed favorably, while speakers of other utilized varieties are portrayed less favorably.

Evidently, there is a lack of studies that examine how Swedish ELT textbooks for upper secondary school, created by different authors and publishers, represent English-speaking cultures and what themes are associated with these cultures. Furthermore, a comparison between the representation of Global North and Global South English-speaking cultures in ELT textbooks is warranted and the impact these representations might have in a Swedish ELT classroom and on its pupils needs to be further discussed.

Aim

This study aims to examine the representations of different cultures in six different Swedish ELT textbooks used in upper secondary school for the course English 5. More specifically, this study will investigate whether there is a contrast between the representations of certain cultures by analyzing the themes attributed to Global North and Global South cultures and the discourse these representations promote. Moreover, the aim is to discuss whether the representations facilitate the acquisition of the cultural knowledge that the curriculum and the syllabus promote. Therefore, this study intends to answer the following questions:

- What central themes can be identified in texts that are associated with respectively Global North cultures and Global South cultures?
- How do the central themes affect the representations of Global North cultures and Global South cultures, respectively?
- How do these representations correlate to the curriculum and the syllabus for English 5?

Method and material

This section contains a theoretical explanation of the methods employed and a discussion of their significance and how they are applied in this study. Lastly, the incorporated material for this study will also be presented.

Content analysis

This degree project is a qualitative study that utilizes content analysis to conduct a text analysis of Swedish ELT textbooks. The utilization of content analysis is motivated by the overall aim of the study, which is to identify and analyze central themes in six selected ELT textbooks. Themes have been identified in this study by conducting a comprehensive reading of the textbooks in order to search for patterns in the content related to Global North and Global South cultures. These patterns have generated the categorization of three overall themes found in texts connected to Global North and Global South cultures, respectively. The criteria for identifying these patterns involved reading and analyzing content that described experiences, social issues, knowledge, beliefs and language attributed to specific cultures or portrayed as being unique to certain groups. The formation of the themes related to Global North and Global South cultures was therefore informed by discernible evidence of mutual content among the ELT textbooks, which highlighted the quality and characteristics of Global North and Global South societies.

Content analysis is therefore suitable for this study since it enables the study to search for central themes that are synonymous with Global North cultures and compare them to the central themes that are synonymous with Global South cultures. According to Bryman (2012, p.380), content analysis within qualitative research adopts an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research and is concerned with understanding the social world and its interpretation, which is determined by its citizens. Furthermore, Bryman (2012, p.290) states that content analysis facilitates the discovery of certain characteristics that further highlight “latent content”, which reveals meanings that hide behind superficial indicators of content. Therefore, the qualitative content analysis in this study is concerned with characteristics, or more specifically themes, that can be discerned when reading and analyzing the ELT textbooks. This ethnographic approach is central to content analysis since there is an emphasis on allowing categories and themes to emerge from the data and

recognizing their significance and meaning in the context that is being analyzed (Bryman, 2012, p.291).

Critical discourse analysis

This study is also concerned with analyzing how the detected themes in texts throughout the ELT textbooks affect the representations of Global North cultures compared to the representations of cultures considered to be a part of the Global South. The analysis of how the themes affect the representations of different cultures is conducted by incorporating critical discourse analysis as an analytical tool. Critical discourse analysis is a suitable method for this study since it facilitates a comparison of the representations of Global North cultures to Global South cultures by providing a theoretical explanation of the noticeable themes in the cultural discourses. Critical discourse analysis therefore allows the study to identify elements of these cultural discourses by analyzing the identified themes that are synonymous with Global North and Global South cultures and how they are represented through these themes and the language used to represent them. This study utilizes critical discourse analysis since it facilitates research that “seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships”, which can be accomplished by for instance investigating prejudice in language use (Titscher, 2000, p. 147). Critical discourse analysis is concerned with language use since it is established that language plays a significant role in constituting or producing the social world (Bryman, 2012, p. 528). This conclusion is based on the view that language is constructive and is utilized to accomplish acts such as attributing blame or presenting oneself in a certain way (Bryman, 2012, p. 530). Therefore, discourse acts as a process that enables people to construct a particular view of social reality that suits their agenda.

Furthermore, choices are made in the discourse process since the aim is to present a social reality in a way that is beneficial to people constructing the discourse. Consequently, these choices will indicate the ambition and disposition of the person or group responsible for devising the discourse (Bryman, 2012, p. 530). These discourse practices are shaped by various structures and ideologies and critical discourse analysis is therefore concerned with highlighting the hidden ideological effects of language use and how the discourse is influenced by power relations (Titscher, 2000, p. 147). The aim of this study is therefore not only to identify and analyze the content and themes that are attributed to different

cultures, but the aim is also to examine and analyze the content and themes and their role in shaping the discourse.

Material

The present study is a textbook analysis and will therefore incorporate ELT textbooks as its primary source. Furthermore, it is concerned with analyzing cultural representation in Swedish upper secondary ELT textbooks. Therefore, the primary material for this study consists of six ELT textbooks that are utilized in the English 5 course for upper secondary school. The textbooks in question are *Blueprint A* (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017), *Core 1* (Gustafsson et al., 2008), *Progress Gold A* (Hedencrona et al., 2007), *Viewpoints 1* (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017), *Echo 5* (Frato, 2013) and *Traction Blue* (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019). Moreover, since this study is concerned with identifying themes and analyzing language, it has solely incorporated texts that focus on reading. Furthermore, images and exercises related to the texts are not analyzed since this study is focused on the narrative of the texts.

During the selection process of the ELT textbooks, the main focus was including textbooks that are utilized by English teachers today. The limitation of the selection process is that there is no record of which textbooks are utilized by the majority of upper secondary schools in Sweden. However, through contact with multiple teachers, it was possible to ascertain that the included textbooks are utilized by multiple Swedish schools. Furthermore, the decision to include six textbooks instead of focusing on a smaller sample was motivated by previous research (Mohamad, 2014; Thomas, 2017; Yuen, 2011). The prevailing approach among these previous studies involves the use of two or three ELT textbooks. Therefore, this study recognized that it would be of interest to incorporate a higher number of textbooks. The larger sample enables the study to identify potentially recurring patterns in the ELT textbooks used in contemporary classrooms and determine whether a pattern in the ELT textbooks exists. These textbooks were published at different times in the 21st century and were created in correlation with both the LPF 94 and Gy11 curricula. An argument could be made that it is more suitable to focus on textbooks that are based on the same curriculum. However, the decision to include textbooks based on different curricula is primarily motivated by the fact that all of the included ELT textbooks are frequently used in ELT classrooms today, even the ones based on LPF 94. This was

confirmed by conferring with multiple English teachers regarding what ELT textbooks they are using at the moment.

Theoretical framework

Due to the aim of the study and its focus on cultural representation, Edward Said's theory regarding *Orientalism* is most suitable. Orientalism is a theoretical framework that focuses on the portrayal of non-Western cultures, established by Western cultures. The "Orient" has historically referred to cultures in the East, but Orientalism is ultimately concerned with how the West represents non-Western cultures. Furthermore, this postcolonial study is situated within what Barry (2009, p. 186) refers to as "postcolonial criticism", since it utilizes Orientalism to examine whether any Eurocentric traditions influence the portrayal of non-Western cultures. These traditions are based on "Eurocentrism, which is defined as "a set of empirical beliefs that frame Europe as the primary engine and architect of world history, the bearer of universal values and reason, and the pinnacle and therefore model of progress and development" (Sundberg, 2009, p. 638).

Orientalism offers a theoretical framework that attempts to answer how people from one culture perceive people from a culture that is deemed different from their own. This perception of other cultures, especially the Orient, has been materialized in Western literature in general and has been distributed throughout Western society. As a result, Said argues that:

Orientalism is dealing with the Orient and making statements about them, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (2003, p. 3)

Therefore, it is of interest to investigate how Western ELT textbooks teach about the Orient, or in this case, Global South cultures. It is important to note that these two concepts are not synonymous. However, Orientalism is relevant to this study since it describes the historical Western discourse regarding the Middle East and many parts of Africa and Asia (Said, 2003, p. 41). Similarly, Global South cultures include regions in the Middle East, Africa and Asia that have historically been referred to as the Orient, but Global South cultures also include cultures in Latin America and Oceania that similarly have experienced colonialism and economic underdevelopment throughout history (Dados &

Connell, 2012, pp. 12-13). Furthermore, Said's epistemology and critique of Western interactions with other cultures have revolutionized social sciences and have provided a basis for researchers to re-examine the perceptions of Third World people, such as those in Africa and Latin America (Sa'di, 2021, p. 2507). Therefore, the two concepts overlap in the discourse regarding colonialism, postcolonialism and global power dynamics, while also overlapping in their inclusion of Third World cultures. Thus, by incorporating Orientalism in the analysis of ELT textbooks, the theoretical framework allows this study to identify themes and language utilized by Global North authors and investigate how the Global North perspective affects the representation of Global North and Global South cultures.

One of the most central principles of Orientalism is the conviction that the view of the Orient affected the language that characterized the discussions about the Orient. Said (2003, p. 7) argues that the positions that the West and the Orient had resulted in a distinguishable depiction of superiority, which was evidence of the position of power that the West held over the world. Said (2003, p. 43) states that this political divide of reality promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). In correlation, Said (2003, p. 40) argues that the Orient is depicted as something one judges, studies, disciplines and illustrates. Consequently, the Orient is for instance portrayed as "irrational, depraved, childlike and different" (Said, 2003, p. 40).

In relation to ELT textbooks, this study is concerned with investigating how the "Orient", or in this case Global South cultures, are represented and if these cultures are contained and represented by a framework that is reminiscent of Orientalism. This is relevant since the textbooks create and depict the reality of Global South cultures from the perspective of the Global North, in which the authors are situated. Moreover, the study is also concerned with investigating how the ELT textbooks' connection to the Global North affects the representation of English-speaking cultures within the Global North. This is ultimately situated in the conviction that no utterance is innocent and every utterance is indicative of the world we live in, which according to Loomba (2015, p. 57) entails that the concept of discourse is characterized by the notion that language is affected by factors such as history and ideology.

Results and analysis

In accordance with the aim of the research project and the stated research questions, the results of the study will be split into two sections. These two sections will cover the representation of Global North and Global South cultures by displaying what themes are central in the texts that are associated with the two different categories of cultures. Moreover, the themes and their role in representing cultures in a certain way will be analyzed by incorporating a critical discourse analysis with a focus on Orientalism.

Common themes regarding Global South cultures

The following section consists of the themes that were identified in texts associated with Global South cultures.

Cultural habits and customs

One reoccurring theme in the representation of Global South cultures in the ELT textbooks is the description of cultural customs and habits. The portrayal of cultural customs and habits varies throughout the ELT textbooks. However, it is discernible in all six textbooks that the portrayals of cultural customs and habits have been created from a Eurocentric norm of what constitutes typical traditions and habits. This Eurocentric view is exemplified in a text that discusses a woman from the Global North traveling to China. In the text she mentions that the people there could not comprehend her decision to leave her job and travel (Gustafsson et al., 2008, p. 173). A similar perception of Global South cultures appears in a text that discusses hooliganism in football and describes how hooliganism in South America has resulted in people being shot and killed (Frato, 2013, p. 23). It is important to note that the text includes descriptions of violent hooliganism in Global North cultures as well. However, these instances of hooliganism are portrayed as far less violent. Depictions of cultural habits and customs, such as being forced to wear burqas (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 21), becoming married at a very young age (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 104) and establishing insect farms (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 48) are other examples that illustrate this discourse. Lastly, one text describes that people in India would come into your house at any time. Furthermore, they would also leave their houses unlocked, which is described as “simple but also frustrating customs” by a non-Indian woman (Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 94). Similarly, other texts (Gustafsson &

Wivast, 2017, p. 72; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 101) also emphasize cultural aspects of India that diverge from the norms of the Global North.

These examples are crucial to the theme since they highlight the contrasting cultural attitudes regarding employment, clothing, industry and habits related to the household. These examples could be included in an effort to broaden the reader's perception of other cultures or challenge the norms of the Global North. However, it can also be argued that the included examples produce a representation of Global South cultures as diverging from Global North cultures. This is due to a discourse that characterizes the cultural customs and habits of the Global South as not part of the norms of the Global North. It can therefore be argued that the representation of Global South cultures in the ELT textbooks is converted to suit the discourse of the Global North. In this case, it is converted to suit the discourse that Global North customs and habits are the norm. Said (2003, pp. 67-68) states that this process was central to Orientalism and allowed the West to shape the discourse for the sake of their culture by incorporating traditions, vocabulary and rhetoric that emphasize the prevailing culture and political norms of the West. It is crucial to emphasize that the aim of the cultural discourse in the ELT textbooks is not necessarily to portray the cultural norms of the Global South as inferior. However, there is a possibility that this discourse prevails since the textbooks portray the cultural norms of the Global North as favorable.

Cuisine and eating habits

Moreover, the representation of Global South cultural customs and habits also includes the description of eating habits in certain cultures. Similarly to the previous theme, the discourse established in the ELT textbooks regarding these cultures' eating habits reflects the same Eurocentric norm. As a result, eating habits that are not considered the norm are frequently highlighted in various texts, leading to a discourse that portrays these eating habits as unusual or even appalling. For instance, guinea pigs are stated to be an important source of food in Peru, while rats and termites are considered to be common in West Africa and South Africa (Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 156). Additionally, bugs are depicted as a crucial part of the diet in many cultures in the Global South (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, pp. 47-48). This diet is subsequently compared to the ones that are prevalent in the Global North, which is highlighted in one text that acknowledges that

eating bugs is considered “taboo” in the Global North (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p.48). Simultaneously the person in the text underlines how widespread this diet is outside of the Global North by stating that “you go to south-east Asia and this is a common thing. You read about it all over the world, that people are eating bugs” (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p.48). Moreover, other texts (Frato, 2013, p. 70; Gustafsson et al.,2008, p. 22; Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 145; Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 103) also highlight certain cuisines and eating habits that may be perceived as prejudiced. For instance, one text highlights the stereotype of Jamaicans as “grass eaters” (Gustafsson et al.,2008, p. 22).

By highlighting these different eating habits and cuisines in the textbooks, it can be argued that they provide a broader perception of Global South cultures and enable the reader to challenge cultural norms. However, it is also feasible that the provided examples generate a discourse that establishes the eating habits of Global South cultures as diverging from the norm and uncivilized. In correlation to Orientalism, Said (2003, p. 207) states that the West has historically portrayed non-Western cultures as uncivilized in an attempt to explain elements of their society that were foreign to Western society. Although the textbooks have no intention of ostracizing Global South cultures, it is apparent that they wish to highlight and explain certain elements of Global South cultures. Therefore, by including the illustrated examples in the textbooks, it is evident that the inclusion of Global South cultures in ELT textbooks does not solely result in inclusiveness, but also results in a discourse that portrays Global South cultures as less civilized due to the representations that illustrate how Global North cultures can be considered more civilized. Consequently, the ELT textbooks expose the pupils to stereotypes about Global South cultures and provide them with an antiquated and detrimental portrayal of these cultures. As a result, the representations of Global South cultures limit the possibility of providing pupils with new perspectives about the world around them in accordance with the syllabus (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1).

Underdevelopment and cultural stereotypes

The representation of Global South cultures also includes texts that highlight hardships that allude to the underdevelopment of different cultures. One frequently adopted practice to establish this representation is to include texts that describe how certain cultures are

stricken by poverty, while simultaneously illustrating how this has resulted in disarray and moral degeneration. It is for example illustrated in a text that includes an interview with a teenage girl living in a township in Cape Town. The fundamental elements of the text depict the culture as stricken by poverty and characterized as a dangerous district full of “drunk people, murderers and rapists” (Frato, 2013, p. 78). Likewise, the dangers of living in certain Global South cultures are further emphasized in texts that for instance depict the oppression girls suffered under Taliban rule (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 19-22) and the dangers of traveling to third world countries (Gustafsson et al., 2008, pp. 199-200). A similar notion is portrayed through texts that illustrate the prevalence of shootings and bombings occurring in countries outside of Europe (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 299), while also highlighting the hardships that women and children in Global South cultures must endure (Frato, 2013, p. 114; Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 87).

The discourse of cultural disparity between the Global North and the rest of the world is further reinforced in the ELT textbooks as multiple texts (Frato, 2013, p. 58; Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 95; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 41) reiterate the underdevelopment of several Global South cultures. The portrayals of underdevelopment also encompass depictions of cultural stereotypes that emphasize traditions and rituals that are deemed antiquated. Both expressions of the theme are illustrated in a text about girls' rights in Malawi. The focal point of the text is the suffering that the citizens are facing due to widespread famine. Moreover, it discusses the hardship of women in the country as they are victims of dangerous and obscene traditions and rituals (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 103). The traditions and rituals that are depicted in the text are not characterized as such, but it is evident that the writer views these as strange and cruel as illustrated when stating “it is difficult to comprehend why this tradition is preserved and encouraged throughout the country” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 103-104).

Similarly, the notion that Asian parents marry off their daughters to a suitable match is described as prevalent in Asian cultures. However, this tradition is portrayed as an antiquated part of the Asian culture in the text (Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 79). This could further demonstrate the presence of a postcolonial discourse in the ELT textbooks, which derives from the views of Orientalism. Said (2003, p. 26) states that the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes has been prevalent in the postmodern world and has resulted in a discourse that emphasizes these stereotypes. The narrative regarding non-

Western cultures has thus been characterized by Western observations of manners, customs and character of a nation deemed remarkable or peculiar (Said, 2003, p. 162).

The theme of underdevelopment is also illustrated in texts (Gustafsson et al., 2008, p. 24; Hedencrona et al., 2007, pp. 86-88; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 30) that accentuate cultural differences. It is for instance exemplified in a text that describes a rich American woman's trip to Africa and India. In the text she expresses that the trip changed her due to the vast amount of poverty and diseases she witnessed (Hedencrona et al., 2007, pp. 86-88). Moreover, in connection with her account of the state of these cultures she states that the prevalence of poverty and diseases is in contrast to the U.S., which inspires the woman to help combat this (Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 87). This discourse is comparable to the one that was prevalent during colonial times where "Orientals were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined" (Said, 2003, p. 207). Similarly, the discourse in the ELT textbooks accentuates the underdevelopment of Global South cultures, while simultaneously highlighting how advanced Global North cultures are and thus is their responsibility to help the less developed cultures. This notion is further emphasized in texts that depict political unrest (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 30) and oppression (Gustafsson et al., 2008, p. 24; Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 87; Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 103) in various Global South cultures. It is therefore possible that these texts contribute to a discourse that characterizes Global South cultures as defective since their societies are perceived to be overwhelmed by issues that are to some extent uncommon or not as persistent in Global North cultures.

Lastly, the discourse regarding the cultural disparity between Global North and Global South cultures is further established in texts that emphasize cultural stereotypes. This is for instance illustrated in a text that depicts the life of a young Asian girl living in London. It highlights stereotypes about Asian cultures such as "Asian girls are not allowed to smoke, drink or swear, and they are definitely not allowed to go out with boys" (Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 79). Furthermore, a text that underlines the scientific accomplishments in India is introduced by remarking that "manufacturing and services aren't the only things India is good at. Nowadays, baby-making is, too" (Frato, 2013, p. 54). Similarly, one text about India states that "privacy laws do not seem to exist here"

(Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 41). Furthermore, negative stereotypes that highlight the contrast between India and Global North cultures are displayed in texts (Gustafsson et al., 2008, p. 204; Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 76), while other texts (Frato, 2013, p. 23; Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 170) include cultural stereotypes that depict certain Global South societies as dangerous. The portrayal of these cultural stereotypes is an example of the power over knowledge that according to discourse theory and Orientalism the West possesses. In correlation, Said (2003, p. 60) states that this has resulted in a Western tradition of presenting a diminished version of non-Western cultures, which is perilous since it generates a limited vocabulary and imagery.

The discourse of underdevelopment and cultural stereotypes can pose some problems in the classroom since the discourse provides the pupils with limited knowledge, which could affect their ability to engage in various social and cultural situations (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1). This is due to the lack of a more complex representation of other cultures that includes depictions of social and cultural situations such as education, holidays and other aspects that the pupils can relate to. By depicting other cultures as different and not including examples that illustrate the similarities, the pupils are not able to recognize the social and cultural aspects that they have in common with other cultures. Moreover, by highlighting cultural stereotypes in the ELT textbooks, the textbooks primarily provide a diminished version of particular cultures. This can be problematic for the pupils since the diminished versions of different cultures may not highlight crucial social and cultural issues that are prevalent in particular cultures, which is a central aspect of the syllabus (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1).

Common themes regarding Global North cultures

The following section consists of the themes that were identified in texts associated with Global North cultures.

Achievements and innovations

It is noticeable that the representations of Global North cultures are more favorable in the ELT textbooks since they include texts that highlight various achievements and inventions that are attributed to Global North cultures. For instance, academic and personal successes are depicted in multiple texts (Frato, 2013, p. 43; Gustafsson et al., 2008, pp. 180-185; Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 52; Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 80; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 35), while descriptions of innovations made in the Global North that benefit the environment are given prominence (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 137; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, p. 55). Similar depictions of achievements and innovations are rare in texts that are connected to Global South cultures and thus the theme is primarily attributed to Global North cultures. It is important to note that three texts (Frato, 2013, pp. 78-80; Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 19-22; Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 103-105;) include descriptions of individual achievements in Global South cultures. However, they only occur in connection with texts that also include unfavorable depictions of the culture. This may create a problematic cultural discourse in the ELT textbooks since it primarily highlights the achievements of the Global North. This process is akin to the one that characterizes Orientalism. Said (2003, p. 153) states that the West reduced the Orient to a version that was suitable for the West, which was perceived as the prevailing and dominant culture. Since all of the ELT textbooks provide a reduced version of Global South cultures while emphasizing the achievements and innovations of the Global North, the cultural discourse in the textbooks unintentionally promotes a view of the Global North as dominant.

Personal ambitions and struggles

One notable observation in the representation of Global North cultures in the ELT textbooks is that texts connected to Global North cultures tend to feature texts that acknowledge individuals and their personal ambitions and struggles. These representations

frequently feature depictions of struggles and hardships that are mostly typical for teenagers and young adults. For instance, one text describes two British teenagers' desire to gain the freedom and independence to accomplish and acquire what they desire and their hardship in achieving this. In this example, gaining freedom and independence involves economic management in order to buy electronics, clothes and go on trips (Gustafsson et al., 2008, pp. 8-10). The representation of conventional teenage issues in the Global North also includes examples of teenagers' difficult experiences in their daily lives. These quintessential teenage problems include the depiction of a teenage girl being bullied in school (Frato, 2013, p. 6) and additionally consist of a story of a teenage boy who struggles with loneliness (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 9). Furthermore, the representation of Global North cultures in the ELT textbooks also consists of texts that contain various stories about teenagers in the Global North and their experiences with love (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, pp. 71-76; Hedencrona et al., 2007, p. 72; Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, pp. 122-123). The experiences vary in the texts, yet each of them describes teenagers' encounters with love and the trials that follow. The joy and struggles of young love are for example illustrated in a text (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 45-46), while the topic of unreciprocated love is also presented in a text (Gustafsson et al., 2008, pp. 57-62). These examples provide stories that may appeal to the teenage pupils who read them since the feelings and thoughts of the protagonists could be more relatable for readers.

These depictions of personal ambitions and struggles contribute to a particular discourse regarding Global North cultures. They create a discourse that is characterized by personal aspirations and hardships that people living in the Global North can identify with since they might have had similar experiences. These aspects are certainly prevalent in Global South cultures and the discourse does not frame it as being exclusive to Global North cultures. However, the ELT textbooks highlight numerous examples of individual ambitions and struggles in Global North cultures, while simultaneously omitting similar experiences had by people in Global South cultures. As a result, whether intentional or not, the discourse regarding personal ambitions and struggles is depicted as limited to Global North cultures. It can be argued that the aim was rather to include themes that the readers of the textbooks could relate to and identify with. In correlation, Said (2003, p. 7) states that creating a collective notion of "us" has resulted in the West comparing itself to non-Western societies. Therefore, it can be argued that in an attempt to create the notion of "us" the cultural discourse in the textbooks relies on depicting experiences that are familiar to

the readers. However, an unintended consequence of attributing these experiences to Global North cultures is that it creates the perception that these experiences are restricted to the Global North, thus further establishing a cultural divide. In connection to the syllabus, this provides the pupils with limited depictions of Global South cultures and therefore might restrict the new perspectives about the world that the pupils gain, which is crucial to their ability to comprehend how people live (Skolverket, 2021, p. 1).

Individual and cultural privilege

Additionally, individual and cultural privileges are themes that appear in different texts in the ELT textbooks. The privileges that are discernible in the texts are not overtly described and are consequently not the focal point of the texts. However, the privileges of the protagonists in the different texts are implied as their trivial grievances are emphasized. One grievance that illustrates this notion appears in a text that describes an American woman's complaints about the exploitative nature of the service in Mexico as she fears that they are ripping her off (Frato, 2013, p. 66). The apprehension towards Global South cultures due to certain grievances and fears that are depicted could therefore inadvertently imply that Global North cultures are privileged since similar grievances and fears do not frequently occur in the Global North. Similarly, the theme of individual privileges can also be discerned in the other ELT textbooks. These privileges are for example illustrated in a text that emphasizes a boy's displeasure about having to go to summer camp. He expresses his disappointment with the summer camp, which is attributed to the lack of privileges such as warmth, a comfortable bed and readily available drinking water (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 38-39). Similarly, another instance of privilege is portrayed in a story about a teenage boy's gap year that includes a backpacking trip to Chile (Gustafsson et al., 2008, pp. 23-25). The story consists of various remarks from his mother where she expresses envy towards her son's privileged situation that allows him to have the time and money to afford the trip. Moreover, cultural privileges are highlighted in the different ELT textbooks and depict favorable aspects of Global North cultures that the pupils may recognize. For instance, the capability to travel around the world (Hedencrona et al., 2007, pp. 37-41), frequently spend money on food and clothes (Gustafsson & Wivast, 2017, p. 165) and possess the privilege to invest time and money into leisure activities such as gaming (Stern Frisenfelds & Santiago Pettersson, 2019, pp. 95-96).

The themes are not necessarily precarious or intended to create a particular discourse regarding the Global North. However, the themes enable the possibility to accentuate certain cultural elements that facilitate the life that people in the Global North are accustomed to and highlight that many people in the Global North are considered privileged. However, due to the absence of texts that depict the privileges of people living in the Global South, the illustrated narratives could contribute to the discourse of the Global North being more privileged than Global South cultures. In relation to Said (2003, p. 40), this is reminiscent of the discourse that defined Oriental-European relations. Although it may be difficult to claim that the discourse in the ELT textbooks has been shaped by Orientalist views and practices, it is possible that elements resembling Orientalism appear unintentionally in the discourse as a result of the disparity in the themes.

Discussion

In correlation to the previous studies, this study suggests that the Global North is portrayed in more favorable ways compared to Global South cultures. For instance, Yuen's (2011) study concluded that the cultural representation in ELT textbooks in Hong Kong favored Western cultures, while the representation of Asian and African cultures was limited and characterized by unfavorable depictions of poverty. Although Yuen analyzed the representation of Western and non-Western cultures, the author's conclusions concur with the findings of this study. Primarily since it is evident in this study that the representation of Global North cultures is favored in the ELT textbooks, while the representation of Global South cultures is also characterized by unfavorable depictions of poverty. Additionally, the findings of this study illustrate that a discourse of cultural distinction between Global North and Global South cultures is promoted and facilitated by incorporating themes that highlight their differences.

Moreover, Lindqvist and Soler (2022) suggest that speakers of standard varieties of Inner Circle countries are ascribed a broader spectrum of occupations and attributes. Meanwhile, speakers of other utilized varieties are linked to less favorable occupations and traits, including associations with criminal activity and human trafficking (Lindqvist & Soler, 2022, pp. 133-135). Similarly, Tajeddin and Pakzadian (2020) have concluded that their chosen ELT textbooks primarily represent Inner Circle cultural and social values. The results of these studies therefore illustrate that the Inner Circle countries are portrayed more favorably and nuanced compared to countries outside of the Inner Circle. In correlation to these findings, it is evident in this present study that the ELT textbooks similarly provide a diminished representation of Global South cultures, which are also located outside of the Inner Circle. However, in comparison to the other studies, this study has concluded that the ELT textbooks contain themes that may create a harmful cultural discourse due to themes that highlight favorable aspects of Global North cultures and unfavorable elements of Global South cultures.

Furthermore, Mohamad (2014) and Thomas (2017) concluded that Western ELT textbooks have been portraying non-Western cultures as the "Other" by relying on cultural stereotypes. Similarly, this study suggests that the representation of Global South cultures in Swedish ELT textbooks is characterized by unfavorable depictions that are facilitated

by cultural stereotypes. Comparable to the findings of Mohamad (2014) and Thomas (2017), this study suggests that negative depictions of cultures are inadvertently included by incorporating language, content and perspectives that highlight the developed and progressive nature of Global North cultures, while Global South cultures are depicted through a set of representative figures that are reminiscent of Orientalist practices. For instance, the incorporation of themes that depict Global South cultures as underdeveloped and dangerous results in a discourse that characterizes these cultures as alien, which was a central component of the discourse practiced by Orientalists (Said, 2003, p. 71).

In correlation to teaching materials, the curriculum and the syllabus, it is discernible that the ELT textbooks present Global South cultures in an exoticized and general manner, therefore neglecting the diversity and complexity of these societies. As the findings of this study illustrate, the ELT textbooks tend to primarily portray cultural aspects of Global South cultures that highlight their difference from Global North cultures. As a result, the ELT textbooks unfavorably represent Global South cultures and create a discourse that implies a superiority of Global North cultures. However, a discourse that promotes cultural convergence can be formed by highlighting themes that Global North and Global South cultures share. This could be achieved by incorporating different texts connected to Global South cultures with themes that are similar to the texts connected to Global North cultures. For example, teenage love and its struggles, achievements, and personal ambitions are themes that facilitate a discourse that focuses on how Global North and Global South cultures resemble each other.

It is crucial to establish this discourse since it is an opportunity for the pupils to develop a nuanced understanding of other cultures in comparison to their own. Furthermore, this discourse could facilitate the development of the pupils' intercultural awareness and competence, which is a critical skill in today's globalized world. Lastly, the discourse about Global South cultures that the ELT textbooks contribute to may affect how the pupils view the world outside of Sweden. It may therefore lead to pupils viewing certain cultures based on the cultural stereotypes that are portrayed in the textbooks. Thus, it is crucial that the cultural representations in ELT textbooks are nuanced in order to broaden the pupils' cultural awareness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has examined the representation of cultural elements associated with both Global North and Global South cultures in six ELT textbooks utilized in Swedish upper secondary schools. The findings of this study demonstrate that there is a noticeable difference between the central themes that were identified in texts associated with Global South cultures compared to the themes found in texts connected to Global North cultures. The significant distinction between the incorporated themes is that the themes that are related to Global South cultures unfavorably portray these cultures. Meanwhile, the prevalent themes in texts connected to Global North cultures contribute to a representation that is favorable for the Global North. The study concludes that the themes that represent Global South cultures promote the discourse of cultural inferiority since the ELT textbooks include themes that highlight the shortcomings and flaws of Global South cultures. The study therefore argues that the ELT textbooks display a pattern of representation similar to the practices of Orientalism since the authors of the textbooks highlight cultural elements based on stereotypes that illustrate how Global South cultures diverge from the norms of the Global North. As a result, the contrasting content and language of the themes enable a cultural discourse that emphasizes how different Global North and Global South cultures are from each other. In relation to the curriculum and syllabus for English 5, this discourse provides the pupils with limited knowledge and affects their ability to engage in various social and cultural situations and participate in a globalized world. For further research regarding cultural representation in ELT textbooks, researchers could compare ELT textbooks from different continents and analyze what characterizes the textbooks' representations of various cultures. This form of comparison could for instance be applied by researchers to analyze cultural bias in the education system or be utilized to explore potential pedagogical approaches related to cultural competence.

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