Using literature in EFL education -
the connection between theory and practice

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Abstract

Originating in a curiosity of how literature is used in the EFL classroom, the aim for this study has been to examine if four teachers’ purpose for, and procedure in, using literature in the EFL classroom concur with what is a useful method on the subject as demonstrated by a methodological model constructed from current research. For this study, a model of beneficial methods of using literature in the EFL class was constructed from selected current research. Because there is a lot of research in this area, there is no claim that this study includes all theories regarding the use of literature in the EFL classroom. Still, it was possible to construct a useful model of common and constructive methods of literature use in EFL education. The conclusion of this study is that the teachers’ purpose when using literature in the EFL class varies with the different teachers. However, they do concur with that of the national syllabi and to some extent also to written research on the subject. Further on, the teachers do work both in accordance with, and opposite to, procedures that the methodological model establishes to be productive.

Keywords: literature, EFL education, English as a foreign language, reading.
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1. Introduction

When teaching the subject of English as a foreign language (EFL), as well as any other subject in school, one has to be sensitive to new trends and developments in the world outside of the classroom. One important issue in EFL education is the enormous amount of English that young adults encounter in their free time. The sources of this English are among others TV, movies, online gaming, and Internet communities. However, the spoken English that young adults hear outside of school is not going to be enough if and when they have to use English on a more professional level. By reading literature, a much needed sophistication and complexity of a language can more easily be achieved for Swedish upper secondary students.

The national syllabus for English at the upper secondary level in Sweden state that being able to read literature in the English language is a necessity for accomplishing the goals for the course. In addition to this, there has been significant research done on how reading enhances the development of learning a second language. Although students at the Swedish upper secondary school should read literature as well as informative and factual texts, this study concentrates on the use of fictional literature in the foreign language class. The concept of literature refers to fictional works such as novels, prose, drama, poetry etc.

The intention of this study has been to examine the use of fictional literature in the EFL classroom. By constructing a theoretical model of literature use in education, specifically in the EFL classroom, a point of reference for analyzing four teachers’ procedure in class was created. This model divides the process of teaching literature into three segments. Before reading and the activities connected to preparation work, where, when, and how the actual reading takes place, and finally the tasks performed once the reading is done. The research used when constructing the model deals first of all with the use of literature in teaching EFL in Sweden, thereby the heavy influence of Bo Lundahl. In addition, research concerning the use of literature in teaching in a broader sense has been used as well.
1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to examine if four teachers’ purpose of, and procedure in, using fictional literature in the EFL classroom concurs with what is concluded from a theoretical model to be useful methods on the subject.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions that have been used in order to structure the analysis begins with the question if a useful model for using literature in the EFL classroom can be constructed from current studies on this subject. Connected to the theoretical model, the analysis continues by exploring how the teachers conduct the preparation work before reading. Where and when does the actual reading take place. And finally, how do the teachers follow up and/or examine the reading in class.
2. Background - working with literature in the foreign language classroom

2.1 Role of literature in the national syllabi for English

The subject of English is taught in the Swedish upper secondary school as a foreign language in three different courses, English A, English B, and English C. The Swedish National Agency for Education has written a national syllabus for each course (Skolverket). For the subject of English, goals to aim for, with regards to literature, are for pupils to “improve their ability to read with good understanding literature in English and reflect over texts from different perspectives” (ibid.).

In English A, which is described as a core subject course, opportunities to read for pleasure should be provided. In addition, pupils should “be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries” (Skolverket). English B is described as a course in which the pupils will have a more analytical focus. The pupils should “be able to read, summarize and comment on the content of longer literary texts” (ibid.). Pupils should also “have a basic orientation to English literature from different periods” (ibid.). Finally, English C is an optional course which provides preparation for vocational work or higher education where English is used as a working tool. Here, pupils should “be able to read literature from different periods and different genres, as well as able in their reading to reflect on textual content and form from different perspectives” (Skolverket). Pupils should also “be familiar with developments in one or more areas such as politics, societal life, religion, literature, film, art or music in an English-speaking country” (ibid.).

2.2 Purpose of using literature in the EFL classroom

The purpose of using literature in the EFL classroom however, goes beyond the requirements of the national syllabi. To be adamant as a teacher in urging students to read and to inspire them to create good reading habits is essential. Studies have been made which show that too many students in Sweden lack good reading abilities (Lundahl 2009). Helping students to discover reading as a pleasurable pastime activity, which can mainly be seen as a beneficial side effect, will aid students in their further education and to navigate in the world outside of school. It has been noted that there are clear connections between reading and other cognitive abilities. Students who are used to reading are more likely to develop a further interest in
reading, thus they develop both their ability to read further and broaden their vocabulary, which in turn leads to an overall success in school (Lundahl 1998).

In addition, it is of great importance to inform the students of the purpose of reading and why they are reading a specific text. Different texts demand different readings. A novel, a recipe, or a road sign sends different signals to a reader on how to decipher them. For students and others as well, it is important to understand why an activity is to be performed. Thus, the purpose of teaching a text should be thoroughly examined by the teacher and presented to the students as well. It is also important that the students are informed that they as readers can have an influence on what the reading experience can bring them (ibid.).

2.3 A theoretical model for using literature in the EFL classroom

2.3.1 Pre-reading

In order to know how to best use literature in language education, the question of how humans read has to be explored. Let us take an example from a work of art. When looking at a famous painting such as Vase with Twelve Sunflowers by Vincent van Gogh, does the observer first notice the yellow strokes which alternately go horizontal and vertical, creating the background? And the tiny but numerous orange strokes that spread out in every direction to finally create the inner heart of a flower? Or does the observer first acknowledge a large yellow rectangle containing a vase with 12 more or less blooming sunflowers? Herein lays the difference in how a reader approaches a text according to the bottom-up and top-down models.

The first part of the example represents a bottom-up approach. Focus is on the individual aspects of a text, such as phonemes and vocabulary, and on the exact and complete understanding of a text (Lundahl 1998). Needless to say, this is a very time consuming endeavor when reading or using a text in the foreign language classroom. The opposite of a bottom-up approach is explained as a top-down model and it is often the one preferred in Sweden (Lundahl 2001). A top-down model assumes that the reader approaches the text by gaining a wider view of it before and while reading with for example, the use of previous knowledge (Lundahl 1998). Admittedly, Lundahl points out how the reader uses both of these strategies in an interactive process while reading (2001). Even so, it is important to acknowledge the difference between the two perspectives since language teaching will take on different forms, with somewhat different results, depending on which perspective the
teacher chooses to focus on. One problem with promoting reading a text using the bottom-up approach is that a student may view reading as simply a tool for language learning and will thereby miss out on the literary experience. This was in fact one of the reasons that the top-down approach was developed (ibid.).

When focusing on a top-down approach the teacher will work with supportive structures in order for the student/reader to gain a wider understanding of the text before reading it. Helping the students by erecting supportive structures, also called scaffolding, is a theory developed from Vygotskij’s description of the zone of proximal development [ZPD] (Lundahl 1998). The ZPD is created when teaching anticipates the student’s development and provides possibilities for that development. Vygotskij himself described it as “what the child does at this moment with help from a more experienced person, he or she can do on their own tomorrow” (Lindqvist 1999, p. 278). Supportive structures are especially important in the beginning of a new book since this is the most critical time in the reading process. They do not however, need to be the same for all students in a class (Lundahl 1998). Critics of the theory of scaffolding have pointed out that its purpose is merely a reproductive feature and only teaches the students to copy the ways of the teacher (Lindqvist 1999). However, Vygotskij does describe the ZPD as pertaining to the dialogue between the adult and child and in a dialogue there is a possibility for both parties to have the opportunity to be critical and develop their own ideas.

One important supportive structure is finding out what the students already know about the topic or theme of the literature. In order to be fully involved in a text, it is important that the students can relate to it with help of their own experience and understanding (Lundahl 1998). Before reading, all students’ previous knowledge can e.g. be gathered up in what Ulrika Tornberg terms “advanced organizers” (2005, p. 82). This entails that the teacher, through different activities, collects what the students already know about a subject or a theme. One example of this would be to write a topic or a theme on the board and together, the class would come up with as many words as possible. By the use of advanced organizers, the students’ own knowledge is activated and hopefully, their interest in the text at hand has been awoken (Tornberg 2005).

One alternative of making the most of the students’ pre-existing knowledge can be to use their own experience of different literary genres. In general, a student who is about to read literature in a foreign language has already read, more or less, in their native language.
They can then draw on these experiences, or literary memories, of how a certain literary genre is constructed (Lundahl 2001). If the student has read for example a few detective novels in the native language, she or he will have a pre-knowledge of how such a genre is written and will have an easier time understanding the story when it is written in a foreign language. The detective genre is filed as a schema in the reader’s memory. Besides genres, schemas can be related to interests, culture or even reader’s feelings. If the subject or context of a text is culturally significantly different from that of the reader, it can be almost impossible to understand the narrative (Lundahl 1998).

Another supportive structure, albeit one that should be used with caution, is working with the vocabulary of a literary text. The main purpose of reading in the EFL class is often to grasp the content of the text. In order to do this there might be a few words or expressions that need to be translated and working with these brings about language learning (Lundahl 1998). One problem with using vocabulary lists in relation to a text is that the students start to focus on small individual parts of the text; they get the impression that it is important to read the text with a bottom-up strategy. Thus, working with vocabulary becomes an obstacle in their reading because they neither draw on their own pre-existing knowledge to find out what the text is about, nor do they focus on the content of the text (Tornberg 2005). This does not aid the students in developing a reading habit or in acquiring the knowledge of how to more easily read extensive texts in the foreign language. The use of vocabulary lists is also debated by Stephen Krashen, because in a list, one word in the target language is paired up with one synonym from the native language (2004). The synonym gives “only part of the meaning of the word and none of its social meanings or grammatical properties” (Krashen 2004, p.19). Vocabulary lists can thus be viewed as a relatively narrow instrument in the process of learning a foreign language.

When it comes to different strategies for how to read more efficiently, there are those who speak both in favor of and against teaching such strategies to students in preparation for their reading. Reading strategies are conscious or unconscious methods of approaching a text in order to understand it better. According to Tornberg, it is important for the students to become aware of the processes on which their understanding of a text rests and to learn how to use these (2005). Tornberg claims that a teacher can begin early in the language learning process to systematically teach students ways of using reading strategies. She mentions among others the use of world knowledge, guessing the meaning of a word, and
using pictures (ibid). This stance is questioned by Lundahl, who points out that any knowledge of how strategies are used by readers is still limited (1998). A feature of reading strategies which complicates the teaching of them is that they vary immensely. Not only from reader to reader, but from one text to another, and from one situation to the next (Lundahl 1998). One risk with teaching strategies for reading to students is that students spend their energy on using a strategy that does not fit the current situation. Then the strategy can become an obstacle to the reading instead of an aid. A teacher’s task then should be to coach the students to reflect over their reading while seeing to it that they not become too involved in the details of the text (ibid.).

In order to read literature, a text is needed. This might seem an obvious statement, simple to fulfill, but it is a part of the preparation to successful reading not to be taken lightly. Teachers need to be aware of the importance of picking reading materials that students can understand. In order to read with ease there needs to be an approximate limit to the number of unknown words on a page, which varies in relation to the language proficiency of the reader (Day 2007). However, if a student fails in the understanding of a text, the reason may not solely be a lack of vocabulary. The student may not be used to reading, not know how to tackle an unknown text, or have enough background knowledge. A student may also take a passive stance towards the reading if she or he believes the only reason for it is language learning (Lundahl 2001). Thus, the importance for a teacher to focus reading activities on content cannot be overstated.

Besides making sure that the level of the language in the text matches, more or less, that of the reader, there is also a need to look at what the student is interested in. If students can find some common ground with the written text, they are more likely to give it a fair chance. In so called extensive reading programs, a completely free choice of literature is promoted which makes it possible for students to choose texts that interest them (Day 2007). This stance is supported by Molloy who points out that if the teacher presents a text and its content, it is more likely that the student rejects it (2003). She refers to L-G Malmberg who claims that “the subjective anchoring in the text needs to appear first in the reader” (Molloy 2003, p. 59). Students would then be more inclined to read if they would find out the conflict of the story on their own. Krashen does however suggest that more reading did take place in classes where teachers made deliberate efforts to promote certain books and where there were good quality libraries accessible for the students (2004).
One type of literary text used in educational settings is so called easy readers or language learner literature. These are books, authentic or rewritten classical works, written especially for language learners. They come in different levels of difficulty, using only a certain number of words and grammatical structures. One example of an easy reader is one written with as little as 300 different words and only in the present tense. Though these texts are a common feature in foreign language classrooms, there are voices speaking both for and against the use of them. The point of language learner literature is for the reader to be able to understand everything and therefore it actually promotes a bottom-up reading, urging the student to decipher each word (Lundahl 2001). Additional negative consequences of reading simplified materials can be an increased teacher dependency and that the students do not develop their own strategies that can prepare them for reading tasks outside of the classroom (Lightbown&Spada 2001).

Criticisms noted, language learner literature has its advantages as long as it is not viewed as a substitute for original authentic literary works. Some argue that the success of these books lies in the very fact that they only use specific words and grammar structures and thus, the student can read them with ease and become a more confident reader (Harmer 2007). If students only read such simplified texts it is not likely that they will reach advanced levels of language learning. However, language learner literature can be used as a stepping stone, providing motivation and linguistic competence, towards more difficult texts (Krashen 2004).

2.3.2 While reading

When the preparation work is complete, it is time to do the actual work – it is time to start reading. Where there are many sources on how to tackle preparation work, there is significantly less written on the actual task of reading. However, there are a few issues that need to be addressed. First of all is the question of where and when the actual reading should take place. While Lundahl claims that the students need to spend their class time discussing, debating and interacting with each other, others tends to disagree (1998). There is research that shows that providing time to read in school does result in more reading for students (Krashen 2004). This means that despite busy schedules and many tasks to complete in a foreign language class it would be important to provide time to read in school, even for upper secondary students.
If reading occurs to a higher or lesser extent in the classroom, there is also a possibility for the teacher to read with the students. Students and children do in fact tend to read more when they see other people reading (Krashen 2004). The teacher has a golden opportunity here to teach by example. Molloy points out another interesting effect of having the teacher reading with the students (2003). If the students view their teacher as merely another reader, they will have an easier time understanding that the teacher’s view of the text is one among many. This will hopefully provide the students with the self-confidence to draw their own conclusions and have their own opinions on the text. This also promotes democratization of the teaching process and of the classroom (Molloy 2003).

Another scenario made possible if reading is done in class, is for the teacher to read out loud to the students. Reading the first few pages out loud can be a sufficient supportive structure to help students to get into a story (Lundahl 1998, Day 2007). A well-known fact is that children who were read to by their parents read more on their own as they grew up (Krashen 2003). A study of French students at an American University also shows that when the teacher was reading out loud, it helped them to “acquire a ‘feel’ for the rhythm of the target language” (Day 2007, p. 130).

Generally, there tends to be a theoretical differentiation between natural learning and systematic education. Krashen refers to this in his input hypothesis as he separates between learning a new language and acquiring one (2004). Applied on the task of reading, this distinction can be seen in the difference between natural reading and a conscious focus of language structure in the text at hand. The school promoting natural reading is also referred to as whole language and they claim that a natural approach to reading has to be premiered within education. The point the whole language school wants to make is that reading in class should be an extension of the students’ lives outside of the classroom. Texts should be authentic and cater to the students own interests. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are all practiced together from a content focused perspective and language learning happens naturally, as it does for young children learning their first language (Lundahl 1998).

The alternative to whole language is the claim that education should focus to a greater extent on systematic learning of the different parts of the language system. Even though Henry Widdowson acknowledges the importance of content at the same time as he claims that it would in fact be contra productive to ignore systematical teaching: “the whole point of pedagogy is that it is a way of short circuiting the slow process of natural discovery
and can make arrangements for learning to happen more easily and more efficiently than it does in natural surroundings” (Lundahl 1998, p. 69). Systematic learning could then involve reading with the purpose of for example looking at and working with sentence structure or verb use, while a whole language approach would claim that learning specific language characteristics as such would happen naturally if students were just reading.

If the students are to use their reading as a more systematical learning tool, there are several ways in which this can be done. One alternative is to keep a reading journal on the side while reading. This can function as a place for students to note down their own reflections while reading; something that can be very helpful after the book is finished. When Tornberg studied the effect of reading journals she found out that the journals had a positive effect on the students understanding of the book (Tornberg 2005). The journal helped the students to take an active part in learning while reading and also in producing their own written text through their reflections and questions in the journal. This way of working with a text is in accordance with a top-down approach to reading, where content and facts are less important than the fact that students can use the text as a stepping stone to produce something new of their own (Tornberg 2005). In addition, when students report back on what they are currently reading, it can encourage them to keep on reading (Lundahl 1998, Harmer 2007, Tornberg 2005).

However, there are both negative and positive results from having students complete tasks while reading. It can be traitorous for example, for the students to work with vocabulary tasks while reading. If the student is constantly looking up words while reading it will most likely work as a diversion of attention and hinder a broader understanding of the content (Lundahl 1998). Just as vocabulary tasks can shift students’ attention from the text to the individual words; questions can lead the student to a fact based focus of the text. The students understanding of the text is then restricted to what it actually says and the student’s individual experience of the text is ignored (Lundahl 1998). Handing out tasks to be completed while reading is a balancing act between how much support a student needs versus how self-sufficient they are in the process of reading. It is certainly a fact that the questions given to a student will affect how she/he approaches the text and thus, the teacher can actually limit the reading experience for the student (Marx Åberg 2009).
2.3.3 After reading

The third part to take into account when using literature as a teaching tool, is the work that comes when the reading is done. The challenge is how to make best pedagogical use of the text, which the students have recently read. The most common tasks handed to students after they have read a piece of literature is questions on the content, learning vocabulary, and finally retelling or summarizing the story (Tornberg 2009). This is despite the fact that modern studies on the subject of reading promote a focus on the dialectic interaction between text and reader. The point of reading should be what the reader does with the text, how she/he understands it, not on translating words and knowing every detail of the story (ibid.).

According to Lundahl, a novel or a piece of literature should not be read as an informative text (1998). If this is the case, the students may neither penetrate the text beyond the words, nor have a chance of a satisfying reading experience. If the student is aware that there will be a test on facts from the text, it will promote her or him to read the text only on the surface, never reaching a more in-depth meaning of the text (Molloy 2003).

In order to promote reading literature there is a need for the teacher to focus on the content of the text and the connection between the text and the particular reader. This is the basis of a literary pedagogy called reader response, which is a fruitful model to use in particular when it comes to teaching literature in a foreign language class. Reader response entails that the purpose of reading is created when a particular reader, with a particular experience, meets a particular text. There is no ultimate, or true, interpretation but the importance lies within the subjective experience, albeit based in the text (Lundahl 1998). One of the main goals in reader response is to create one’s own meaning of a text and to work actively with language learning without it having to be the only purpose (Lundahl 2001). The theory can be illustrated by Louise M. Rosenblatt’s explanation that what happens when someone reads a text is equal to a transaction or relationship between a reader and the text (Molloy 2003). As between people, some meetings do not lead to future contact or leave an impression on us. The same is true for a text and its reader and it is this relationship and the reasoning behind it that can teach students to appreciate literature.

Because the trend is to validate and explore an individuals’ perception of a text, letting students participate in literary discussions is an effective way of working. By discussing literature, students learn how to express their feelings and how to interpret a text, at the same time as they are practicing different language skills (Thyberg 2009). When students
pose their own questions to the text, they start to move towards a more in-depth understanding of the text and this understanding deepens even more when students share and hear other readers’ perspectives (Lundahl 2001). Discussions can be conducted in whole class, peer to peer, or in teacher-student conferences. Krashen points out that peer to peer discussion was more helpful to the students (Krashen 2004). Molloy on the other hand points out the importance of teacher participation in literary discussions (2005). According to her, a teacher needs to show the students an example or pattern of what a literary discussion can look like. She also quotes Rosenblatt who underlines the importance in creating a safe environment where the weaker or shyer students are helped and the more outspoken students are hindered from taking over the discussion completely (Molloy 2005).

In order for a literary discussion to not fall flat or mainly be about facts from the text, it is important to help the students in connecting the text with their own life experiences. Molloy points out that the form for a literary discussion can produce a new piece of work, meaning that the dialectic interaction between students, text, and teacher produces “a new joint text” (2008, p. 78). By comparing and contrasting the fictional characters’ lives with the students’ own lives, the discussion can prepare the students for a more analytical and reflective way of reading (Molloy 2008). By participating in the discussion, the teacher can be perceived as one reader among many. It is important, both for students and the teacher, to adhere to the fact that the teacher’s version and reflection is not omniscient. Posing questions on the teacher’s reading teaches the students to view opinions about literature in a critical manner. In the long run, perhaps it will encourage them to read more themselves in order to have their own opinion about a text.

When literary discussions branch out to cover more than the content of the text, it happens that they touch upon fundamental values. Fundamental values are issues that should be present in all upper secondary school activities according to the national curriculum (Lpf 94). In the curriculum, fundamental values entail democratic values, freedom and integrity of the individual, equal value of all people, and gender equality (ibid.). Anna Thyberg points out that ideals such as empathy, tolerance, and equality are general didactic goals in the Swedish upper secondary school and they do not necessarily pose a hinder to subject didactic goals (Thyberg 2009). Literary discussions provide an excellent platform for these discussions. Molloy explores the issue of fundamental values by discussing the American literary critic Gerald Graff’s idea to “Teach the Conflict” (2003, p. 294). This
basically entails that teachers should not shy away from difficult subjects, but teach students about the conflicts that they experience in their everyday lives (Molloy 2003). Conflicts that the students experience are micro versions of society’s conflicts and should be brought into light and explored with the students. While conducting research, Molloy experienced that the students were genuinely interested in subjects such as power, powerlessness, and sexuality, connected to issues of class, gender, ethnicity, and generations (ibid.). If such issues are discussed and explained through a theoretical perspective with the students, they can gain a deeper understanding of such issues in their immediate proximity. Molloy goes as far as to propose that by reading and discussing literature in school, in order to learn about life and its possibilities and conflicts, a school subject could evolve and become more humanistic and democratic (ibid.).

In addition, one of the aims of reading literature within the subject of EFL should be to promote students’ awareness of other people’s cultures and worldviews. The subject of English could in fact be especially suitable for discussing fundamental values through literature (Thyberg 2009). Thyberg points out how valuable it is to problematize the English language and teach students about ideological meanings of different varieties of the English language. According to Thyberg, this can most effectively be done by reading postcolonial literature: “with a postcolonial point of view it becomes obvious that neither literature nor languages are neutral media” (2009, p.108). However, one consequence of reading postcolonial literature can be that the students are unable to identify with the characters and the distinction between different people ends up being reinforced. The need for a teacher to follow up and provide the students with the right theoretical tools for such discussions cannot be overstated (Thyberg 2009).

Another way of working with literature once it is read is for the students to produce something new of their own. When students write about what they have read it lets the teacher know a few things: that they have done the reading, how much of it they understood, and/or how they felt about the difficulty of the text. More important is perhaps that the teacher can find out if the students have gained a deeper understanding of the text, if they understood the text beyond the words (Lundahl 1998). Writing helps all students to evolve in their thinking and develop their analyzing skills, but it especially helps more quiet students or students who need a bit more time producing their answers and opinions with such development. Writing is a slower process than discussing and it requires more time to develop
and explore one’s own thoughts and arguments in written form (ibid.). Confusing thoughts can easily become more clear and structured once they are put down on paper.
3. Method

This study is a case study with a qualitative approach where focus lies on reflection and analysis of a specific situation. A qualitative perspective is preferred when exploring how and why individuals reason or act in a particular way (Trost 2010). The focus of this study is on reflection over how literature is used in the EFL classroom. This is to a great extent dependent on the individual teacher’s attitudes and actions and thus, a qualitative approach was chosen. A more quantitative approach would also have produced answers to how literature is used in teaching EFL but would have lacked the reasoning behind the particular usage.

With a qualitative perspective the investigation was carried out as a case study where the procedure of teaching EFL with the help of literature was studied among four teachers. A case study can be defined as an investigation where the emphasis is on the study of a specific environment or situation (Bryman 2002). In this study, the case consists of a situation where literature is used to teach students the English language. Information from teachers of how they plan to use literature was gathered through interviews and the real life executions of these plans were observed during class. This information was then analyzed through a theoretical model of beneficial ways of using literature in teaching EFL. In this manner the study was performed in an inductive manner, gathering information and then analyzing it against a theoretical perspective.

3.1 Procedure

The first part of gathering the information needed for the study was to conduct an interview with each of the four teachers. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information about what the teachers consider to be the best way of using literature in EFL-teaching, their attitudes and views on the subject. Thus, a qualitative research interview was chosen as the format, where the answers become interesting for the study once they are analyzed through a theoretical perspective (Trost 2010). An interview guide was created with a number of question areas and follow up questions were posed to obtain answers to the questions connected to the areas (appendix B). Thus, the interview was conducted in a structured manner while the questions were open questions (Trost 2010).

Secondly, to gain more depth in the analysis, observations were carried out in the classrooms of the interviewed teachers. When interviewed, the teachers had the opportunity to
explain how they wanted to conduct this item of EFL-teaching. Observations on the other hand, can only provide data of something that is occurring at this moment (Kylén 2004). Therefore, the observations could provide a broader picture of how the teaching takes form in the moment. Although the observation was meant to report on what actually happened in the classroom, it is true that no observation is subjective. It is possible however, to make it less subjective by making it more structured (ibid.). To provide these observations with structure an observation form was created (appendix A). The form consists of areas of interest connected to the questions posed during the interview. In addition, it has been seen that behavior is affected when the subjects know they are under observation (Kylén 2004). Despite this, the observations have been carried out openly in class where it was explained to the students that the observer was a teaching student writing a graduate project on the use of literature in the foreign language classroom. No further information of what was to be observed during class was given to minimize the influence on the events in class.

3.2 Informants

In order to find teachers who would be interested in participating in this study and who would be teaching a literature segment during the time span in which this study needed to be completed, 35 English teachers were emailed at five different upper secondary schools in Gävleborgs Län. Nine teachers responded positively and four of them are used in this study. These four teachers turned out to all be women and were picked out because they had classes which would be rewarding to observe during the requested time span.

Teacher A is female. She teaches Swedish and EFL. She received her degree in 1997. The class she taught in this study was an English C-course where the students received an introduction to reading literature in English with the theme of banned books. Teacher B is female. She teaches EFL and history. She received her degree in 2008. The class she taught in this study was an English A-course where the students presented the book they had read orally. Teacher C is female. She teaches physical education and health besides EFL. She received her degree in physical education and health in 1972 and added the subject of EFL 15 years ago. The class she taught in this study was an English B-course where the students presented the book they had read orally. Teacher D is female. She teaches EFL and history. She received her degree in 2004. The class she taught in this study was an English B-course where the students received an introduction to English literature.
3.3 Reliability

This study is based on four teachers and their procedures in teaching EFL. The study is presented as a case study and is dependent on the particular situation studied. The opinions and methods are only representative for the teachers in the study. Thus, no general conclusions can be drawn on the use of literature in the EFL classroom. However, it is unlikely that the four teachers picked out for the study should in any distinctive manner be different from other teachers of EFL in Sweden.
4. Investigation

The investigation is made up of two parts, interviews with four teachers at four different schools and observation of a class led by respective teacher. This section contains a summary of the qualitative interviews with the teachers. The interviews will then be analyzed in section 5 through previous described theoretical model and observations. The observations are presented in appendix A without commentary.

4.1 Interview teacher A

According to teacher A, they use quite a lot of literature in the EFL classes. An avid reader herself, she is very interested in literature and thinks that working with literature is an important part of EFL education. Besides novels they also read quite a few short stories in class. This works in favor for the student who may not be as strong of a reader, then she or he would at least have read something that can be used to satisfy the goal of the curriculum.

When asked about the purpose of using literature in a foreign language class, teacher A explains that it varies with exactly what the teacher has in mind. It is important for the students to read in order to gain a reading experience and to develop their language ability. On the B-level, she wants to teach the students more about different cultures. On the C-level the students read and analyze the literature through a theme and compare the opinions about the book when it was written and how it is perceived now. Before every reading takes place, she reminds the students of the curriculum goals and what level of literature should be read in order to reach a certain grade or goal of the class. Being a reader herself, teacher A points out that she knows it is good for the students to read.

To prepare students before they start the actual reading is something that teacher A finds important. She tries to always have some kind of preparatory work before every text that is to be read. One big theme that they work with is the future. They work quite a bit with different exercises connected to the theme and the students’ pre-knowledge of the subject. This way the students are mentally prepared for the novel that they will read. It helps them to analyze and connect the novel to the present day and how the world looks today.

When choosing what book to read, teacher A points out that they work closely with the school library. The librarian usually has a book talk with the class on any theme the teacher asks for and presents books connected to the theme. After this, the students can themselves choose a book on the theme. The books are picked out because the librarian has
read them or the teacher knows from experience that they work well on the particular level. They do have access to easy readers or language learner literature and teacher A does not mind using them. However, it rarely happens in her classes that a student is on a language level where such literature is needed.

The actual task of reading is mostly done at home. If the students read a short story it can be done in the classroom and if you have a class of many weak readers, it can be fruitful to use an hour or two for reading. In such cases teacher A would have no problem with reading herself together with the class. There are also instances where teacher A reads out loud to the students but mostly she uses recorded books for that purpose. Such books are dramatized and have funny sound effects which the students appreciate. While reading, teacher A’s students have a notebook next to them where they answer certain pre-stated questions about the book and mark important quotations. She tries to encourage the students to work with vocabulary while reading, especially for students who are more advanced.

The questions that the students answer while reading are mostly focused on the content of the book and they form the base for discussions in small groups. According to teacher A, the discussions are a very important part of the reading experience and when it works well the students themselves carry on the discussion. In order to receive a higher grade it is also important for the students to analyze their reading, to make connections with society and place the book in a context. To some extent, writing can also be done from the literature.

4.2 Interview teacher B

When reading literature in teacher B’s class, they follow the locally set directive of reading 2 books per school year. According to her, it is not that many students who are readers and there is a resistance among the students against reading in general. Many claim that they have not read a single book in their entire life, even if she believes that to be a slight exaggeration. Teacher B thinks that the students learn more as they see the words and sentences in print. Occasionally teacher B has had to remind the students about the purpose of their reading literature in the EFL class, since many students are focused on test results.

Before picking out the material to be read, teacher B presents the framework for the reading. She explains how much time the students have for the reading and how they will be examined. After this the school librarian comes to teacher B’s classes and presents a selection of books. She explains what they are about and how difficult they are. Then the
students may choose a book to read form a selection of 3-4 titles. In the English B-course they have a free choice of the second book that they are supposed to read. If there are significantly weak readers in the class, teacher B does not mind using light readers or language learner literature.

The reading does not occur in class but is a home assignment. The students are to keep notes while reading and after 30 pages they are to present a certain amount of words that they did not recognize. The same procedure is repeated after half the book. According to teacher B, the students find it disturbing to some extent to pick out words because they feel it is disruptive to the reading. She does not read out loud in class because the students mostly read different books.

After the reading, teacher B checks the reading by giving the students five questions to answer as a platform for discussion. After this, the books are discussed in smaller groups where the focus lies on content of the book. To be able to discuss the content is a minimum requirement and to reach the higher grades the students have to be able to pose more reflective questions. Teacher B tries to read the same books as the students in preparation for examination. The discussions can sometimes extend to fundamental values, especially if there are books that they can identify with. It depends on how well the student can express her- or himself, some pose very profound questions while others have more shallow ones. In the English B-course the students have to turn in a written book report in addition to the discussion and should then compare the first book they read in the course with the second one.

4.3 Interview teacher C

Teacher C explains that how much time they spend on literature in the EFL classes depends on what kind of class she has. However, in the local district they have decided that the students should read 2 literary novels during the school year. She explains that the students learn a lot from reading literature in a foreign language. They learn about different literary époques in English speaking countries and about authors and how they think. They also learn a great deal about the language, including grammar and vocabulary. In teacher C’s opinion, it is very fruitful to read and she herself is a member of a book club that the English teachers have and where she receives many pedagogical tips of books for students to read.
Before the students start their reading, teacher C likes to emphasize the content and message of the book because this is what she finds most interesting with literature herself. She does however also attempt to discuss grammar. When it comes to picking out the right material, teacher C explains that they have a very good librarian at the school that does a presentation of different books and genres every term for each of teacher C’s classes. After this presentation the students choose themselves what to read. Teacher C points out that she does not force her students to read classic literature. Teacher C is not familiar with light readers or language learner literature but explains that the librarian provides her with a list of some books that are easier than others.

The reading is mostly done outside of class. Teacher C’s students acquire the book in the beginning of the semester and then they also find out when it is supposed to be finished. She wants her students to work with vocabulary while reading in the sense that they look up words that make it hard to grasp the content of the text. The class observed for this study is about to read the same book together and then they will have questions to work with after every chapter in the book. There are instances when teacher C reads out loud to the class but she finds it hard to balance that act. Some students think it is great and some can almost become irritated by it.

After the reading is done, teacher C prefers to examine the reading by having book talks in small groups. According to her, it is very fruitful to hear them talk and see how much they have prepared, what they think, and how curious they are about the other students’ books and opinions. The discussions may end up dealing with fundamental values and are then extremely interesting but all students do not have the courage to be open enough. They have not worked with writing from the read literature.

4.4 Interview teacher D

According to teacher D, the purpose of using literature in EFL education is first of all because they are required to do so by the national curriculum. Teacher D finds it invaluable to read when it comes to expanding one’s vocabulary. Reading is also a valuable source for exploring other worlds and in order to see other people’s perspective on things. Reading can be a very important starting point for further discussion and a way for the students to practice their analytical ability. Connected to this, teacher D discusses how reading and analyzing the reading is a valuable way of increasing one’s self-confidence because when it comes to
opinions on literature the students are practically never wrong as long as they can motivate their opinion.

In addition, teacher D expresses her concern that the Swedish students today are not very good at reading and they have read very few books in general. She feels that she has a personal mission to present good literature to students and show them what the world of books can offer them. She thinks it is especially important to introduce classic literature. Such literature can help her students in gaining an understanding for other times and why people have made the choices they have during history.

Teacher D explains that the preparation work before reading changes a bit from year to year, since she likes to improve on her own teaching. She always attempts to inform the students in advance of what is expected of them and how they are to be examined on their reading. Sometimes she hands out a list of useful vocabulary words for when they are to discuss and analyze their book. In the English A course there is not too much preparation work done. Teacher D makes sure that they have a book and that they get started reading. According to her, this can be challenging enough at this level. For the English B students, she helps them to understand how to think analytically. She suggests that they attempt to read a classic, and informs the students of the literary époque of different books to give them more of a historical context.

When it comes to picking out the reading material, teacher D gets help from the school librarian. The librarian places example of the type of books teacher D asks for on a table and then the students can browse on their own and pick out what they want to read. They may also choose something completely on their own. Teacher D helps out by posing questions and offering suggestions, trying to coach them to choose something they are interested in. Easy readers or language learner literature is available in the library and there are students in the English A course who reads books that are not much more than a short story. Teacher D finds such books useful in the sense that it is important that all students have the opportunity to succeed in reading a book.

The reading occurs mostly at home during several weeks. There are instances when a bit of reading will be done in class but teacher D does not read with the students. Sometimes the students read out loud to each other as a speaking practice. Rarely does teacher D read out loud from a novel but it can happen with a short story or part of a text. While they read, teacher D tries to inform the students of how important it is to work actively with the
words in order to expand one’s vocabulary. Teacher D does strive for learner autonomy, which means that the students should be aware that they are learning for themselves and not for her.

After the reading is done, the students are to hand in a book report. They have the same outline in both English A and English B but in English A the report is mostly concentrated on content, characters, and plot. In English B, teacher A expects more of an analytical text on the book in question. She constantly attempts to encourage the students in having their own opinion about the book and to not just write a summary. Besides the book report no other writing is done in connection with the reading.

There are instances when book discussions come about. Mostly it is a group of 3–4 students who will present the book they have read with a special theme, for example how the characters in the book have developed. Discussions of fundamental values connected to the reading do happen occasionally but not in an organized manner.
5. Analysis

In this section, the interviews with the teachers and the observation of their classes are analyzed through the theoretical model of teaching literature in the EFL class presented in section 2.3.

5.1 Purpose of using literature in the EFL classroom

All four teachers questioned in this study mention that they follow the national syllabi and local directive when it comes to the purpose of reading literature in the EFL class. All four teachers hand out written instructions to the students before they start reading, informing them on what to concentrate on and how they will be examined on their reading. If the students were not aware of how and why they are reading literature the foreign language, there is a risk that they merely see it as another language practice and concentrate on a bottom-up reading of the text. A bottom-up reading will make it much harder for the students to read longer texts such as novels (Lundahl 1998). In the long run this will most likely work against the students developing good reading habits with all its benefits.

In addition to following the national syllabi and local directives, the interviewed teachers find the purposes for using literature in the EFL classroom to be numerous. The students practice vocabulary, grammar, and language structure this way. The students also learn about different cultures and time periods and hopefully gain a perspective on their own lives. Further on, the students practice their ability to analyze and develop their own self-confidence as readers. All these reasons behind literature use concur with the purposes presented in the theoretical model. What the teachers did not mention however, is the beneficial influence of being a good reader has on the students’ overall education.

The trend that students today are not reading enough is confirmed by two teachers in the study. Teacher B points out that using literature in class is important because her students sometimes claim they have never read a single book and that she finds a resistance among the students against reading. Teacher D explains as well, that she finds Swedish students to not be very good at reading. She finds that she has a personal mission to introduce young adults to the world of literature and what it has to offer them. Her opinions were visible in the power point presentation she had constructed for her class. The presentation was clearly aimed towards young adults and demonstrated the commitment it takes to engage and lure students into the world of literature. In a fast moving international
community, it is absolutely vital to be able to read fast and efficiently. If Swedish students are in fact becoming worse and worse at reading, it will have detrimental consequences for the nation as a whole. A crucial antidote to such development is engaged and interested teachers who can pass on the joy and importance of reading.

5.2 Procedure before reading

As mentioned, when reading literature in the Swedish educational system, a top-down approach towards the text is most often preferred. A top-down approach includes providing the student with supportive structures in order for the student to become familiar with the text before reading it. Teacher A states in her interview that she often lets the students work with a theme connected to the chosen books before starting to read. This is exemplified in the observation of her class where they spend a few hours on exploring the concept of banned books. The librarian and teacher A placed the books that the students were about to read in a historical and literary context. Preparing the students in this way for their reading, not only helps them understand the text at hand, it will also hopefully spur their interest in the particular book they chose. The books that the students could choose from were mostly classics such as *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*. As Lundahl points out, a book that is from a significantly different context than that of the reader, demands sufficient preparation work by the teacher (1998). Without the preparation class, these books would be harder for the students to accept. When the students know that they were once, or are still, banned, makes them at once more interesting to read.

Another example of helping the students to see the context of the literature they are about to read, is teacher D’s power point presentation. It is as an introduction to English literature. The presentation introduces different literary époques, their historical context, famous authors, and classic books connected to this time. The feedback from the students on this presentation was overwhelmingly positive according to teacher D. A few students had even enquired about some of the classic works presented for their reading. This exemplifies how it is fruitful to present a context to the literature that the teacher wants the students to read. Teacher D’s attempt for her students to read a classic is greatly helped by this presentation. If reading for example *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift without any knowledge of the historical context, the book becomes merely a silly fairytale. To be able to
have a more analytical focus when commenting on the book, which is part of the curriculum for English B students, would then be almost impossible.

Another supportive structure within the top-down approach is to take into account what the students already know. In teacher A’s class, they read a banned poem together and discussed it. While discussing, teacher A poses questions to the students on what they know about the subject, if they have read anything similar before, and if they can relate to the poem. Teacher D did also ask the students what they know about the different subjects in her power point presentation. Although questions such as these were posed in both these classes, the response from the students was minimal. This is a key feature of the before work that needs more attention and class time. It is important for the students to be aware of the fact that they can relate to the text with their own experiences (Lundahl 1998). For a teacher, the importance of being aware of the students’ pre-knowledge of an area connected to the literature is vital. It informs the teacher of any gaps in the students’ knowledge of a specific subject and they can provide the students with more background information and an extra gush of self-esteem needed to tackle the literary text.

When it comes to working with vocabulary, all four teachers say that they think the students should do so on their own, while they are reading. It should be done because working actively with words from the text is a valuable way to expand one’s vocabulary. Teacher D points out that her goal with prompting the students to work with vocabulary is that she wants them to achieve learner autonomy, to understand that it is for themselves they are learning. Thus, the students are hopefully working with words that will help them understand the content of the book instead of looking for a certain number of words. As Lundahl points out, working with vocabulary in this way can be fruitful (1998). However, there was also an example of the downside to vocabulary work. Teacher B says that in her class she attempts to get the students to work actively with the text by writing down a certain amount of words from the book. However, her students often complain and say that this task interrupts their reading. What the students are most likely experiencing is an obstacle in their top-down strategy, as explained in section 2.3.1.

Regarding how their students pick out what to read, there is a common factor among all four interviewed teachers. They all use the school librarian at their respective schools for presenting a selection of books on a particular level, theme or genre, from which the students then have a free choice. The benefits of using the school librarian are many. The
workload for a teacher leaves no room for keeping oneself completely updated in the world of literature. Especially when it comes to determine the level of the language in specific books, a librarian has both the education and hopefully the experience to be helpful in this matter. A librarian is also most likely aware of out of the ordinary titles, or titles regarding special interests that can help students to succeed in their reading endeavor. From the selection chosen by the librarian, all four teachers let the students themselves choose which book to read. This means that the students do not have a complete free choice of reading but neither are they forced to read a specific book, as encouraged by the theoretical model in section 2.3.1. Teacher D points out how she goes around asking the students what they think, what they are interested in, and promoting certain books as Krashen recommends in section 2.3.1 (2004). When picking out material to read, it can be concluded that the middle way is to be recommended; gentle guidance promoting student authority.

None of the teachers had anything against using light readers or language learner literature. Teacher C was not aware of them but explained that the librarian would pick out certain books that were significantly easy to read. That this sort of literature would hinder the students reading development, as claimed by both Lundahl and Lightbown and Spada, did not come up in the interviews (2001, 2001). Instead, both teacher A and D pointed out that all reading is potentially good for the students and that it is better to have the opportunity to succeed with an easy piece of literature than fail because they would have to read an authentic novel. If the author succeeds in re-creating the atmosphere and tension of the original story, there seems to be a crucial beneficial factor to using such literature and that is the opportunity to succeed and gain self-confidence as a reader.

5.3 Procedure while reading

Where and when the reading should take place is another important decision for the teacher to make. All four teachers report that their students do most of the reading outside of class. Reading a novel is a task that the students have many weeks to perform while they do other work in class. This is in accordance with Lundahl, who claims that class time should be used for other activities, such as interaction between students (1998). However, if reading novels are constantly a task students need to complete outside the classroom, equal to homework, then there is a risk that reading will receive a negative connotation. Interaction, discussions, and instruction should not have to suffer in order for students to read. There are however,
other activities that could easily be traded in for time to read, such as research, writing, or written grammar practice.

For teachers A, C, and D, there are instances when reading happens in class. Nevertheless, none of them read with the students, even though teacher A states she would not have a problem with doing that. This is unfortunate because the teachers are not setting an example of how important reading literature is. Teacher C and D says it happens that they read segments or shorter stories out loud while teacher A on occasion uses recorded books. When the teacher is reading out loud it gives the students an opportunity of listening to the language flow, as it is experienced live. Listening to such reading is different from movies or recorded listening activities in that they are rehearsed and rarely exhibit language mistakes and strategies on how to get around unknown words, or try out a pronunciation. Most English teachers in Sweden have Swedish as their native language and will exhibit a slight accent. If teachers are confident and read with the accent, it shows students that you do not have to be a fluent speaker without any accent in order to have the courage to communicate in the foreign language. Both silent reading in class and reading out loud activities transmits the message to students that reading is an important activity, worthy of expensive class minutes.

When it comes to the question of a focus on whole language or systematic learning, it seems quite clear that the four teachers are using both perspectives. All four teachers encourage the students to work actively with vocabulary, looking up words they do not know or simply finding a certain number of words for their reading journal. This is, as Widdowson points out in section 2.3.2, a faster route to learning a language than if one would simply read and hope that the vocabulary becomes familiar that way (Lundahl 1998). On the other hand, in accordance with the whole language perspective, the students are encouraged to pay attention to the content of the book and to be prepared to discuss characters, plot, and theme. The students themselves have the power over choosing a book that caters to their interests and mostly authentic texts are used in these four teachers’ classes. With not enough time in an EFL class for the amount of literature that has to be read in order for students to acquire a language in a completely natural way, this balance act might just be the right way to proceed.

Besides encouraging the students to work actively with vocabulary as they read, three of the four teachers ask the students to take notes or answer questions in a notebook while they are reading. The note taking on the side and marking of important quotations, are
most likely beneficial to these students. The students are supposed to produce a book report of some kind in all four classes and in order to remember and argue one’s opinion on a book it can be crucial to have notes from the reading. There is though, risks of having the students concentrate too much on the facts of the text but this can be worked around by the teacher’s instructions. In order to help students become better readers, teachers have to instill the joy of reading in their students. This cannot be done if the novel at hand is only seen as a text that has the concrete answers to factual questions. The challenge is for teachers to pose questions which encourage students in having their own opinions about the book and to connect the story to current events or to their own lives in a more analytical manner.

5.4 Procedure after reading

It is vital for students to see how their reading or opinions about a certain book matters. It is in this way that teachers can promote reading as a valuable and interesting past time activity to their students. This is something that teacher D has put a lot of emphasis on in her classes. She points out how one important purpose of using literature in the EFL class is for the students to gain self-confidence and she puts a lot of effort in encouraging the students that their opinions of a book can never be wrong as long as they are based in the text. Teacher D illustrate the reader response perspective of how important it is to pass on to the students that it is the dialectic interaction between them and the text that is important, not that they manage to come up with a correct opinion or analysis. If students in Sweden are in fact reading less and less, it is most likely because the world of literature is not perceived as accessible to them. Herein lies an important task for teachers when it comes to the procedure after the reading is done. Students need to know that the teacher is not merely after a factual summary of the book in order to see that it has been read. In fact, teachers have to convey the message that it is the particular student’s reading of the particular book that is important and valuable.

To use literary discussions as a way of examining the reading is an effective way of working, as mentioned in section 2.3.3. Thyberg points out that it is through a discussion that students can develop their ability to formulate thoughts and opinions effectively (2009). Using literary discussions as an examining process is done by three of the four teachers. The students sit in small groups and discuss their books and the teacher sits in on the discussion. In teacher B’s class, the discussion demonstrate two important factors regarding this procedure. First of all, all the students in the discussion group had read the
same book and had written questions regarding the text in advance as a base for the
discussions. Because all students were familiar with the story, instead of summarizing the
book, describing characters etc., the students could dive right into discussing the meaning of
the narrative and how they perceived it. The questions the students had written were also
dealing with how the other students had perceived the events or the characters’ actions. More
than once did the students connect the story to what they themselves would have done in a
similar situation. Although not all students of the different groups participated as much in the
discussions, the students that did had a great opportunity to practice their analytical skills as
mentioned by Thyberg in section 2.3.3 (2009).

Secondly, in teacher B’s discussion groups, she herself took an active part. As
described in section 2.3.3, Molloy encourages teacher participation in the literary discussions
(2009). This is in order to set an example of how literature can be discussed and analyzed, but
also for the students to see that the teacher is a reader equal to them and that no one’s opinion
is more correct than others. Teacher B mentions in her interview that she was insecure about
whether to join the conversation or to be a silent observer. In the observed discussions,
teacher B lets the students pose their questions and answer them. After each question, when
they were finished talking, she poses follow-up questions connected to almost all the
questions. The difference between doing this and simply asking the students what else they
thought about the book is that she constantly makes the students take one more step further in
their thought process. She was in fact teaching them to evolve their analytical thinking about
something in the novel and sharpen their reflective skills. This was also done without taking
over the conversation or inhibiting the students’ further discussion. To be most effective,
literary discussions need to be a place where the students can practice their analytical skills as
well as a place where they can learn more of how a piece of literature can be discussed. Thus,
literary discussions need to be more than an examining process; they need to be an
educational tool as well.

When asked if the discussion in class ever touches on fundamental values, all
the teachers state that it happens occasionally. Mostly it has to do with how open or confident
the students are in the group but also, as teacher B points out, how much they can identify
with the story. In fact, in teacher B’s discussion group, the students did touch upon
fundamental values at one point. Teacher B posed a question regarding bad luck and the
students developed this further, connecting bad luck to the lack of self-confidence and how
respect for, and a belief in, oneself manifests itself in their own lives. Unfortunately the teacher did not pick up on this thread but brought the discussion back to be about the character’s constant bad luck. It seems that all four teachers do find discussing fundamental values important, especially since such a discussion involves quite a bit of analytical ability and thus leads to a higher grade, but that they do not pursue them intentionally. As mentioned in section 2.3.3, Molloy points out how important it is that teachers encourage these kinds of discussions, even though they might be difficult to pursue, because they help the students to understand their own reality (2003). Two reasons why teachers might find them difficult to discuss are if they see themselves as keepers of all answers and that both students and teachers might find it hard to talk about such issues without getting too personal. Here is where literature opens up a window. Discussing fundamental values through literature is fruitful in the way that it allows the reader to explore subjects or conflicts that affect her or him personally without invading their privacy.
6. Conclusion

The initial focus for this study comes from a curiosity about how literature is used in the EFL classroom. The aim for this study has been to examine if four teachers’ purpose for, and procedures in, using fictional literature in the EFL classroom concur with what is a useful method on the subject, as demonstrated by a theoretical model constructed from current studies and writings on the subject. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study deals with the reasoning and actions of four individual teachers, without any claim of reaching any broader conclusions beyond the teaching methods of these four particular teachers. The study concludes that regarding the purpose for using literature in the EFL class, the teachers’ attitudes and purposes concur with that of the national syllabi and to some extent also to written research on the subject. Further on, the procedures vary with the different teachers, but in regards to the aim of this study it is clear that when using literature in the EFL class, the teachers work both in accordance with, and opposite to, what the theoretical model establishes to be productive.

Teaching is not an easy, straightforward occupation with clear directives on how to perform. Every day a teacher encounters new and complex situations where she or he has to balance many factors in order to effectively conduct their teaching. Despite the fact that there are no easy instructions for how to teach, staying up to date with writing and studies concerning the area can provide valuable methods which in turn can assist and help teachers in the classroom. For this study, a model of beneficial ways of using literature in the EFL class was constructed from a selection of current studies. A factor to take into consideration is that the sources sometimes advocated different methods. In addition, as in almost all situations that deal with the human factor, it is important to use one’s own experience and critical thinking when applying theoretical models to real life situations. However, this study suggests that there is sufficient research to be able to construct a useful model for using literature in EFL education. The result of the study reflects how important it is to be up to date on studies within educational methods in order for the students to gain the most from their education.
Works Cited


Marx Åberg, Angela. ”’Uppgift eller upplevelse?’ Om läsuppgifters roll vid läsning av


Appendix A: Observation reports

This section contains the report from each observation without commentary.

Observation teacher A

Date: Oct 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2010.

Time: 2 pm – 3.50 pm.

Number of students: 26

Class: English literature introduction - Banned Books theme (English C).

2.10 pm Library

Librarian describes the theme Banned Books, which is based on the Banned Books week in the US. She tells the students what banned books are, what they are most likely to contain and how they are reported. Students are listening.

2.33 pm Six of the books on the official list of banned books in the US are available in the library and the students are to choose one each to read for class. They may also choose another on the list but they will then have to get hold of it themselves. Most of the students pick a book quickly and leave. A few students stay behind to ask the teacher for advice on picking a book.

Teacher comments that she would have wanted to prepare the students herself of the theme before the library presentation. She is afraid that they may not have picked the right book for them now. The problem was that the librarian was only available at this time.

2.50 pm Classroom

The teacher starts to prepare the projector to show students information online. Technical issues. Classroom chatter.

2.56 pm Teacher reads poem “Education for leisure” by Carol Ann Duffy out loud and students can follow along on screen. She asks the students what they think the poem is about. A few students comment reluctantly on the poem. Teacher asks “What does the poem mean?” She continues to ask questions on the content of the poem. The teacher connects the poem
with the banned books theme and asks why this poem would be banned. Students give a few suggestions. Teacher asks “Do you agree?” “Could you be inspired by a book to do something?” “Could people kill after reading a book?” No answer from students. Teacher continues “Would we forbid a poem like this?” “Am I responsible if you now kill somebody?” Students laugh.

3.10 pm The students are handed an article on why this poem was banned and asked to read it in class.

3.15 pm Discussions follow with student participation on what the article says. The teacher gives ideas on how to interpret the poem.

3.20 pm Teacher explains difference between slander and libel on the whiteboard.

3.35 pm Break

3.40 pm The teacher organizes the class into discussion groups of 4 or 5 for discussing handout on banned books. Some groups discuss, others watches movies on their lap top.

3.50 pm Class discussion. Students are to answer questions on a hand out. About half the class participates the rest have their own conversations.

Observation teacher B

Date: Nov 17th, 2010

Time: 1.55 pm – 3 pm.

Number of students: 11

Class: Book reports on reading (English A).

1.55 pm First group to do their book reports arrives, four students in total.

1.58 pm Teacher introduces the discussion and asks who wants to go first in asking the questions they have written on the book they have read. All four students have read the same book.

2 pm Students take turns in asking their questions and the others answer. The two boy students participate actively in the discussions while two girl students listen quietly. Students
speaks English except when there is a word unfamiliar to them and they then say it in Swedish while the teacher translates it. Teacher comments by clarifying some questions and further elaborates on the students answers. The teacher also poses follow-up questions, one helping students to place the story in a historical context. Teacher also asks the students to compare the book with the movie.

2.15 pm Teacher dismisses the group and asks students to return their books to the library. Next group enters, which turns out to be only one boy.

2.20 pm Teacher decides to start discussion despite the fact that only one member of the group has showed up. Student starts by discussing the book’s main character. Student continues by posing questions on the content of the book and describing how he feels towards the characters of the book.

2.28 pm Second student enters. First student has to repeat his questions and the boys discuss the content of the book. Teacher poses follow-up questions and asks the boys to explore the idea of bad luck. Students tie the discussion of bad luck to how self-confidence works for them. Teacher brings back the discussion to the subject of bad luck.

2.35 pm Group two leaves classroom and group three enters.

2.40 pm Teacher asks the group to address the others with their questions one at a time. Students’ questions are concentrated on characters, characters’ intentions and plot. Teacher poses follow-up questions and when the students are out of questions she adds additional questions to keep the discussion going.

3 pm Class dismissed.

**Observation teacher C**

Date: Nov 8th, 2010.

Time: 10 am – 11.15 pm.

Number of students: 12

Class: Book report presentations (English B).
10.03 am  The teacher presents today’s activities which she has written on the board. After this the students get to practice free speech for 2 minutes each in small groups, describing the previous week’s activities. The teacher takes roll.

As this is concluded, the teacher hands out a new history assignment and explains the procedure.

10.15 am  Half the class leaves to do independent work in the library while the students who are due for a book report stay. One student did not prepare the report and is excused to the library as well. There are four students remaining and they take seats opposite each other. The teacher joins the group. The teacher hands out a sheet of paper where the students are to write their name and name of their book. The teacher also hands out a sheet of paper with supportive notes in case the students would lose track of what they are talking about.

10.25 am  Book discussion starts. The teacher begins by describing what a literary discussion is and how it can work. In order, the students each go through the following points. While talking there are few questions in between the students and all are about content of the book. The teacher helps the discussion moving forward by asking questions on content.

- Author description. Students have not looked up their authors and are asked to hand that in later.

- Description of the plot of the book. Here the students also mention the genre to which the book belongs. A student asks about Swedish word *skalbagge* and teacher looks it up in a dictionary.

- Describing when and where the story takes place.

- Describing the main character.

- Give the theme of the book.

- Providing their opinions of the book.

10.50 am  The students are done and the teacher gives them her evaluation and earned grade. After this she asks them for their opinion of English class in general.
11.05 am  Class is dismissed.

**Observation teacher D**

Date: Sept 29th, 2010

Time: 8.50 am – 9.50 am

Number of students: 12

Class: Introduction to English literature (English B)

8.51 am  Teacher greets students and takes roll. Teacher explains that there will be a power point presentation as an introduction to English literature. Teacher asks students if they know anything about English literature or any authors connected with it. A few students answer.

8.55 am  Power point presentation starts. Power point contains information, themes and readings from different literary époques in British literature. Students watches attentively. Teacher asks questions on the material and students comment.

9.12  Teacher gives additional information about Shakespeare and defines a sonnet. Teacher aid explains famous metaphors attributed to Shakespeare and conducts an activity connected to these metaphors.

9.30  Teacher continues the power point presentation.

9.45  Teacher reminds students to read their books and class is dismissed.
Appendix B: Focus questions for interview.

Lärarintervju:

*I den här intervjun är min uppgift att ta reda på hur du arbetar med skönlitteratur i din undervisning och vilka strategier du har för att få dina elever att läsa på målspråket.*

Syftet med intervjun är att skapa ett underlag för en analys av hur tillvägagångssättet (the procedure) för att använda skönlitteratur i det engelska klassrummet ser ut. Samt, hur den förhåller sig till rådande forskning. Uppsatsens fokus ligger alltså på proceduren av och möjligheten för, användningen av skönlitteratur i undervisningen och inte på din personliga lärarstil.

1. Jämfört med andra delar av engelskaundervisningen, ägnas en stor/mellan/liten del åt läsning och arbete med skönlitteratur?

2. Vilket syfte anser du att läsning och arbetet med skönlitteratur fyller i engelskaundervisningen?

3. Känner du att du är uppdaterad på forskning inom detta område?

4. Hur ser för-arbetet med ett litteraturmoment ut i din undervisning?

5. Hur fungerar själva läsningen av litteratur i din undervisning?

6. Hur följer ni upp läsningen av litteratur när den är avklarad?