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Abstract

A focus on communicative language teaching has led to literature taking a less prominent role in EFL teaching, to the extent that its value has been put into question by both teachers and scholars. This study aims to investigate upper secondary EFL teachers' attitudes and practices to teaching literature. This is achieved through qualitative semi-structured interviews where seven EFL teachers from various regions in Sweden participated. The findings revealed highly positive attitudes where the teachers acknowledged the value of literature teaching and highlighted many learning benefits such as language development, cultural awareness, personal growth and a greater understanding of the world at large. They also identified different challenges regarding the use of literature. Finding literary texts suitable to students' levels and motivating students to read were among the difficulties the teachers emphasised. The teachers' goals and practices for teaching literature varied significantly. However, they all seem to use literature as a tool for teaching aspects pertaining to language and culture rather than focusing on teaching literature in itself. Further research is needed to better understand the role that literature has in EFL teaching, especially regarding teachers' goals and practices for teaching and using literature.

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Appendix A

1 Introduction

The use of literature in the language classroom has been a topic of interest for some time and many scholars recognise its benefits for various aspects of language development. These pedagogical benefits include, among other things, language enrichment, broader cultural awareness and increased motivation (e.g. Savvidou, 2004; Aladini & Farahbod, 2020; Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014).

Starting with the assumption that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' main goal is to develop students' communicative competence, Savvidou (2004) stresses that literature can be a powerful pedagogical tool. Communicative competence encompasses various aspects, such as linguistic accuracy and the ability to understand nuances, creativity and versatility. It also involves understanding and interpreting discourse in different social and cultural contexts. In this way, literature can provide a gateway to the real world and help students gain deeper knowledge of the language (Savvidou, 2004; Aladini & Farahbod, 2020, p. 83).

However, the inclusion of literature in the language classroom has been widely debated, especially after the development and spread of communicative language teaching (CLT) (McKay, 1982, p. 529). CLT was developed in the 1970s and 1980s as the importance of interaction in language teaching was highlighted. According to CLT, interaction is seen as both a means and the main goal of language learning. It is believed that learning takes place when students communicate and interact in meaningful situations that are based on relevant authentic material. The focus is on being able to use the language appropriately in order to achieve mutual understanding (Bardel, 2018, p. 2). When CLT became extremely influential in many parts of the world, the use of literature in second and foreign language classrooms was questioned. This led to literature taking a less prominent role in language teaching and focus was given to other aspects of communicative competence. Common arguments against using literature are, for example, that it does little to achieve the learning goal of being able to interact in the target language, that it is usually too complex language-wise and includes cultural concepts that could be too difficult for students to comprehend (McKay, 1982, p. 529).

In Sweden, the syllabus for English in upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2020, p. 1) promotes the use of literature in the English language classroom as a way to develop students' cultural and linguistic knowledge. The syllabus emphasises the importance of developing students' social and cultural awareness both in a historical and contemporary context in order

for them to broaden their perspectives and to better understand the world. It is explicitly stated in the core content in all three courses of upper secondary English (Skolverket, 2020) that students are required to read literature in some way. Teaching in English 5 should cover “content and form in different kinds of fiction” and “literature and other types of fiction” (p. 2, my translation). In English 6, it is stated in the syllabus that “themes, form and content in film and literature” along with “authors in relation to literary periods” should be included (p. 5, my translation). Moreover, when teaching English 7, “contemporary and older literature and other fiction in various genres such as drama” must be incorporated (p. 8, my translation).

Although it is explicitly stated in the Swedish syllabus for English (Skolverket, 2020) that teachers should include literature in their teaching, it does not detail how literature should be incorporated. This results in teachers having a great deal of freedom regarding the choice of texts and methods for teaching literature. Therefore, the type of literature and the approach chosen will vary significantly depending on the teachers’ interpretation of the curriculum and syllabi. Several questions arise when taking this into consideration. In what way do EFL teachers in Sweden perceive the use of literature in the classroom? Do they acknowledge its value or are they reluctant to use literature in their teaching? In what way do they choose to implement literature?

Little research has focused on the teacher perspective regarding the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom, especially in a Swedish context. Therefore, the aim of this study is twofold. First, to gain insight into EFL teachers’ attitudes towards literature and its value and implementation in Swedish upper secondary school classrooms. Second, to shed light on EFL teachers’ practices when teaching literature and their reasonings for choosing a specific approach. The study seeks to add more knowledge to a research field that is limited. Thus, the research questions are the following:

1. What attitudes do teachers have towards using literature in the EFL classroom?
2. What methods do teachers use when implementing literature in the EFL classroom?

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical background regarding the inclusion of literature in language teaching where various definitions of literature, the benefits of literature teaching and some prominent approaches will be addressed. Section 3 provides a literature review regarding teacher attitudes and pedagogical approaches when teaching literature. Following this, section 4 explains the rationale behind the chosen method in regard

to data collection and analysis. This in turn is followed by a presentation of the results in section 5. Finally, a discussion and a conclusion are included in section 6 and 7 respectively.

2 Theoretical Background

This section lays out the theoretical background regarding the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom. Section 2.1 begins by exploring the various definitions of literature in order to better understand the concept. Section 2.2 then goes on to explain the reasons for incorporating literature in EFL teaching by highlighting the potential benefits of its inclusion. Finally, some approaches to teaching literature in an EFL context are presented in section 2.3.

2.1 Defining Literature

The concept of ‘literature’ has been defined in various ways in research depending on different historical and cultural factors. Traditionally, Literature with a capital ‘L’ denotes the ‘best’ writing in any language or society and encompasses canonical literary works. This definition normally excludes contemporary writing and focuses on classical literary works produced in the past. Conversely, literature with a small ‘l’ includes non-canonical genres and contemporary writing in everyday texts such as advertisements, newspapers and magazines (McRae, 1991, as cited in Calafato & Paran, 2018, p. 29).

Edmondson (1997, as cited in Calafato & Paran, 2018, p. 29) rejects the inclusion of non-canonical genres in his definition of literature. He defines literature as written texts that have an apparent status and are perceived as having a certain aesthetic value. In a similar manner, Stecker (1996, p. 681) describes literature as “the body of works of art produced in linguistic media, and that this body is to be defined in terms of the possession of certain artistic values”. According to Stecker (1996, p. 694), in order for a work to be considered literature, it has to possess either an aesthetic, cognitive or interpretation-centred value. The aesthetic value entails the pleasure the literary work gives the reader who experiences the world of the work. The cognitive value denotes the conceptions the reader derives from the work, whether it is values, ideals or theories. The interpretation-centred value is the idea that a work invites its readers to be creative since it allows them to interpret the meaning of the work.

The perspective regarding the connectedness of literature and art is also seen in various definitions of literature in dictionaries. The *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.) for example,

defines literature as “written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value” and “writing that has lasting value as art”. Hence, it can be understood that literature is defined based on having high value during a long period of time along with the fact that its value is artistic.

Although the definitions presented in this section are vague, it is clear that literature is a broad term that can encompass a variety of written texts. Whether a piece of writing is considered literature or not is quite debatable among scholars due to the broadness and vagueness of the term ‘literature’. Although students are required to read literature in all three courses in upper secondary English, the Swedish syllabus (Skolverket, 2020, p. 8, my translation) does not explicitly detail what type of literature is to be included other than “contemporary and older literature and other fiction in various genres such as drama”. Taking this into consideration, this study takes a straightforward, albeit broad, definition of literature as literary texts, such as novels, poems, plays and short stories. This definition includes literary texts which use language creatively to engage readers in a cognitive and emotional way.

2.2 Why Teach Literature in the EFL Classroom?

Using literature as a means for learning a language is not a new concept. Throughout the 20th century, literature was used as a tool for learning English in the foreign language classroom. However, the purposes and approaches used when teaching literature changed considerably during this time. Kramersch and Kramersch (2000, p. 568) provide a historical overview of the role of literature in the EFL classroom during the previous century and conclude that literature was applied for “the aesthetic education of the few (1910s), for the literacy of the many (1920s), for moral and vocational uplift (1930s-1940s), for ideational content (1950s), for humanistic inspiration (1960s-1970s), and finally for providing an "authentic" experience of the target culture (1980s-1990s)”. During the better part of the last century, the value of the use of literature in the EFL classroom was more or less evident. However, today it seems to be frequently questioned by both researchers and teachers (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 249). Currently, much research is conducted to identify the possible benefits literature can have in the EFL classroom.

Duff and Maley (1990, as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 250) highlight three main criteria supporting the inclusion of literature in the language classroom: the linguistic, the methodological and the motivational. The linguistic criterion justifies the use of

literature by highlighting it as an important source of authentic material that allows students to be exposed to genuine authentic language in a variety of text types, styles and registers. Literature encompasses a wide range of language, including both slang and formal language. It presents many different linguistic features that students become exposed to, for instance, sentence structure, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary. Thus, literature enables students to become familiar with linguistic forms and communicative functions in the target language (Van, 2009, p. 2).

The methodological criterion refers to the fact that literature allows for different interpretations and opinions. This leads to students taking an active role in their learning where they interact with the text in order to make sense of the language. From the methodological point of view, literature enables students to become autonomous in the learning process since they are required to construct meaning from the text through interaction. Finally, the motivational criterion indicates the relevance of including literary texts by emphasising that they increase students' motivation and reading pleasure. Literature creates authentic and meaningful contexts which help stimulate students' imagination, develop their critical thinking, creativity and emotional awareness (Duff & Maley 1990, as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 250; Van, 2009, p. 2; McKay, 1982, p. 531).

Moreover, Collie and Slater (1987, as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 251) argue for the importance of an additional fourth criterion which defends the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom, namely a cultural criterion. Reading literary texts enables students to see the world from different points of view through representing imaginary worlds. The settings and characters are often vividly described which leads students to see the world through the characters' eyes and discover cultures and societies different from their own. In other words, teaching literature helps develop students' cultural awareness (Van, 2009, p. 2), which is an aspect that the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket, 2018) emphasises as one of the fundamental tasks of the school. For example, the Swedish school should enhance students' "ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others" and "appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity" (p. 4).

To conclude this subsection, there are many reasons for teaching literature in the EFL classroom. Not only is literature a helpful tool in developing students' language proficiency and ability to interpret different types of texts, it also increases creativity, motivation, emotional and cultural awareness, develops critical thinking and stimulates imagination.

2.3 Approaches to Teaching Literature

While there is plenty of support for the use of literature in the EFL classroom, as outlined in section 2.2, there is no account of how these potential benefits may be achieved. Many different approaches to teaching literature have been proposed throughout the years. This section will present a few approaches that have been found to be frequently referenced and used in research.

Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Savvidou, 2004) suggest three different approaches to teaching literature in an EFL context: the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model. These three models differ regarding how they approach the literary text in the classroom. The cultural model is described as a traditional teacher-centred approach. Teaching focuses on the social, political, literary and historical context of the literary text. Students are exposed to different cultures and ideologies and are encouraged to explore them in relation to their own personal experiences. The model focuses on the cultural aspects of the text and little attention is given to language (Carter & Long, 1991, as cited in Savvidou, 2004).

Contrary to the cultural model, the main focus of the language model is the language in literary texts. According to this model, literature is seen as a tool to help develop students' linguistic knowledge. Literary texts are approached in a methodological way where, with the help of the teacher, students identify different linguistic features such as literal and figurative language, direct and indirect speech. The literary narrative in itself is not central in this model, rather it is used in a way to create language activities that focus on developing students' language skills (Carter & Long, 1991, as cited in Savvidou, 2004). Finally, the personal growth model centres on the engagement and interaction with the literary text. Students are encouraged to draw meaning from the text by expressing their thoughts and opinions and relating these to the issues represented in the text. This model examines the language use in the text as well as placing it in its particular cultural context in order for students to interpret the text based on their own experiences (Carter & Long, 1991, as cited in Savvidou, 2004).

Other perspectives regarding approaches to literature teaching that is frequently referenced in research is Van's (2009) six approaches to literary analysis. These include: New Criticism, Structuralism, Stylistics, Reader-Response, Language-Based and Critical Literacy. Although their original purpose was not to explore teaching methods in the EFL classroom, Van's (2009) six approaches can be useful when exploring the various ways in which teachers approach literature, and literary analysis, in the language classroom. The New Criticism

approach focuses on finding one correct meaning of a text through close-reading and analysis. This is achieved by examining the formal elements of the literary text such as rhyme, metre, imagery and theme. The social, political and historical context of the text is not focused on and the reader's own reaction is not relevant in this approach since the reader must be objective in his or her interpretation (Van, 2009, p. 3). Moreover, according to the Structuralism approach, a literary text is approached as a scientific object. The reader focuses on the linguistic and structural aspects of a text, such as the components of a narrative and places the text into a hierarchical system. This approach does not recognise the reader's reaction to the text and, like the New Criticism approach, emphasises objectivity (Van, 2009, p. 4).

Furthermore, the Stylistic approach focuses on analysing the literary language of a text in order to develop student's ability to understand complex and unconventional structures that are often found in literature. In this approach, students are encouraged to use their linguistic knowledge to develop their own interpretations of the text. Contrary to New Criticism and Structuralism, the reader's role in the production of meaning is recognised (Van, 2009, pp. 4-5). This is also stressed in the Reader-Response approach since it emphasises the fact that interpretation of a text is achieved by the interaction between the reader and the text. Students' personal responses, opinions, experiences and feelings towards the text are seen as a vital part in constructing meaning. The Reader-Response approach allows students to take an active role when reading and working with literature. Since the interpretation of a text is drawn from the reader's personal experiences, there is no correct interpretation. In other words, the meaning of a text can be explained in a multitude of ways (Van, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Like the Stylistic approach, the Language-Based approach focuses on examining literary language. However, this approach is seen as more applicable in EFL teaching and learning since it considers literature to be a valuable tool in developing students' language skills. It emphasises activities like brainstorming, making predictions, rewriting the endings of stories and jigsaw readings where students can interact and collaborate. The teacher's role is to merely act as a guide and not interfere in the production of meaning (Van, 2009, p. 7).

Lastly, Critical Literacy is the final approach that Van (2009) highlights. Although not developed to teach literature, Critical Literacy reveals important factors about how language and power are intertwined which is relevant when teaching language and literature. According to Van (2009, p. 7), "Critical Literacy facilitates students' critical awareness about the role of language in producing, maintaining, and changing social relations and power". In this approach, students explore how social and political factors influence the language they use

and learn. When working with literary texts, students should be made aware of “how texts relate to issues of identity, culture, political power, gender, ethnicity, class, and religion” (Van, 2009, p. 7).

Naturally, there are both positive and negative effects of all of the approaches mentioned in this section. When evaluating the relevance of these approaches in the EFL classroom, Van (2009, p. 8) argues that the Reader-Response and Language-Based approaches are best suited for EFL teaching and learning since they take the students’ prior knowledge and experiences into account. Although this chapter only presented a few approaches to teaching literature, it provides a background regarding how teachers may approach literature in the EFL classroom.

3 Literature Review

This section presents and analyses previous research regarding the teacher perspective of literature teaching in the English language classroom. It is divided into two sections: teacher attitudes (3.1) and teaching practices (3.2). The former presents empirical research investigating EFL and ESL teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in the English language classroom. The latter includes studies focusing on exploring EFL teachers’ approaches to teaching literature. Although this study focuses on the upper secondary school level, the studies presented in this section include educational contexts that span from various levels and age groups in view of the fact that little research has been conducted in this field.

3.1 Teacher Attitudes

As mentioned in the introduction, the use of literature in the EFL classroom has been a topic of debate for some time and teachers seem to be divided in their opinions about whether or not literature has a place in the EFL classroom (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 249; McKay, 1982, p. 529; Savvidou, 2004). This section will explore teachers’ attitudes towards literature in the EFL classroom, the possible reasons for their views along with the perceived possibilities and challenges of literature teaching.

When investigating whether teachers recognise the value of teaching literature in an EFL context, their opinions are very divided. In Wasanasomsithi’s (1998, p. 310) doctoral thesis, the attitudes of EFL teachers in Thailand were investigated through interviews and questionnaires. The findings suggest that while many seem to acknowledge the potential

benefits, some teachers seriously question its relevance and effectiveness in the EFL classroom. According to these teachers, literature does not meet students' needs and goals, neither academically nor professionally. Moreover, Kayaoğlu et al. (2012, p. 187) interviewed teachers in Turkey and found that some teachers are reluctant to include literature in their teaching since they perceive the study of literature as a highly academic discipline which is not suited for an EFL context.

Teachers who find literature teaching challenging mention a number of factors that make the inclusion of literature difficult, one of them being related to reading comprehension. Tasneen (2010, p. 1) explored both teachers' and students' attitudes regarding the use of literary texts in international schools in Thailand. Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations revealed, among other things, that the linguistic level of the literary texts and students' cultural unfamiliarity posed some difficulties for students' reading comprehension. In a study carried out by Işıklı and Tarakçıoğlu (2017, p. 87), the researchers focused on identifying EFL teachers' difficulties regarding literature teaching in Turkey. The majority of the teachers expressed that students' low proficiency levels constituted the most important challenge. Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 310) study yielded similar findings, where teachers felt that the complex and distinct language of literature may be too difficult for students who have not yet reached an adequate level of proficiency in the target language.

Moreover, another reason for teachers being reluctant to use literature in their teaching appears to be students' low motivation and the challenges that follow. Teachers feel that it is extremely difficult to select literary texts that capture every student's interest. Additionally, they view students' low motivation for reading and learning about literature as a significant obstacle when teaching literature (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, pp. 310-311; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017, p. 87). According to the participating teachers in Rezanejad et al.'s (2015, p. 165) study, teachers must raise awareness among students regarding the benefits of studying literature in order for them to be motivated to read.

Another important factor that teachers often mention when asked about the challenges of teaching literature are external factors such as time constraints (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 311), curricular factors, centralised exams (Kayaoğlu et al., 2012, p. 187) and lack of resources (Tasneen, 2010, p. 14), which all hinder the implementation of literature in some way. For example, these external factors led the teachers in Kayaoğlu et al.'s (2012, p. 187) study to choose simplified versions of literary texts and merely use them for linguistic purposes.

Although teachers see many challenges with incorporating literature in their teaching, research shows that they generally have quite positive attitudes towards literature and view it as a valuable tool in language teaching (e.g. Kayaoğlu et al., 2012; Wasanasomsithi, 1998; Calafato & Paran, 2019). The main purpose and benefit of using literature in the EFL classroom that teachers often mention is developing students' language. Gilroy (1995) investigated the thoughts and feelings of ESL teachers in Scotland regarding literature as a strategy for second language learning. The findings showed that teachers view language improvement as the main purpose of teaching literature. According to the teachers, literature illustrates important grammar points and includes "good examples of English" (p. 6). Correspondingly, Wasanasomsithi (1998, p. 311) found that teachers believe literature provides meaningful language input. Developing students' vocabulary and reading skills were found to be some of the main purposes for using literature in Calafato and Paran's study (2019, p. 35) where EFL teachers from Russia answered a questionnaire. This result is corroborated by Tasneen's (2010, p. 14) study where teachers stated that literature promotes vocabulary learning and develops students' four language skills.

In addition to teachers believing that literature develops students' language in various ways, many seem to hold the opinion that it also increases students' cultural awareness. The fact that literature includes valuable cultural elements and is an important cultural resource in the EFL classroom were prevalent feelings among teachers in both Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 311) and Calafato and Paran's (2019, p. 35) studies. Teachers mentioned that literature is a doorway to other cultures and that it promotes cultural awareness among their students. Lastly, further benefits of using literature according to teachers are that it enhances students' creativity in language use, stimulates their imagination (Kayaoğlu et al., 2012, p. 187), prompts discussions, encourages students to read (Gilroy, 1995, p. 6) and creates ideal opportunities for developing critical thinking skills (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 311).

3.2 Teaching Practices

The approach that a teacher chooses will undoubtedly affect the learning outcomes. Although it would be interesting to focus on the possible effects of teaching literature, this section will only focus on the approaches that teachers use when incorporating literature in their teaching. Some reasons for them choosing a specific approach will also be addressed.

Apart from identifying teachers' classroom practices in five different high schools in Turkey, Akyel and Yalçın (1990, p. 175) sought to explore teachers' various goals when

using literature in the EFL classroom. The findings showed that the majority of the participating teachers (19 out of 22) had similar goals. They wanted to introduce their students to classical British and American literature as an educational experience, broaden students' horizons, increase their cultural awareness, stimulate their creative and literary imagination, develop their appreciation for literature and add to students' knowledge of the world. Interestingly, there was no mention of developing students' linguistic knowledge, rather attention was given to broadening students' cultural and literary competence (Akyel & Yalçin, 1990, p. 175). How the teachers chose to fulfil these learning goals were also very similar in Akyel and Yalçin's (1990, p. 176) study. It was found that they opt for teacher-centred activities where the teacher gives informative background lectures and includes questions about the literary text to guide their students in their understanding. Students read the texts aloud in class and were asked to write essays related to the material. The authors concluded that this method led the students to being unable to relate the texts to their own experiences, which was stated as a negative factor.

Using a teacher-centred approach when incorporating literature in the language classroom can be found in further studies that have sought to investigate teaching practices in secondary schools in Malaysia (Rashid et al., 2010; Suliman et al., 2019; Hwang & Embi, 2007). In their study, which included 18 secondary schools, Rashid et al. (2010, p. 94) found that when using literature in their classrooms, teachers focus little on interaction and view literature as a means for students to learn about art and literature in general. They merely used literary texts as a source of information for students which led to teacher-oriented rather than student-oriented classrooms. The reliance on teacher-centredness can also be found in Suliman et al.'s (2019, p. 43) quantitative study where they too aimed to discover the approaches used by teachers. Instead of eliciting information from students and allowing them to interpret the texts on their own, the teachers often explained the meaning of the literary texts using simple terminology. Spending a great deal of time explaining the meaning of the literary texts was a finding that can be corroborated by Hwang and Embi (2007, pp. 18-19). In their study, questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews revealed that teachers are a dominant figure in the classroom who read, explain and retell the story to the students. Hwang and Embi (2007, pp. 18-19) found an absence of activities that aimed to develop students' language and encourage a personal response. The researchers concluded that this approach resulted in students being passive in their learning since they spend a considerable amount of time listening to the teacher, following the teacher's dictation and copying the right answers.

Both Rashid et al. (2010, p. 87) and Hwang and Embi (2007, p. 19) conclude that the reason for the teachers choosing a teacher-centred approach can be explained by the students' low proficiency level. In Rashid et al.'s (2010, p. 87) study, the teachers expressed that they had to "spoon feed" the students and use the students' first language in order for them to understand the literary texts. The consequences of this could be that the goals of generating students' personal responses and appreciation for literature may not be achieved (Hwang & Embi, 2007, p. 19).

Moreover, two studies have shown that teachers tend to use literature as a filler-type exercise and do not incorporate it during a longer period of time (Gilroy, 1995, p. 8; Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 309). Although teachers seem to want to integrate literature in a more extensive manner, syllabus restrictions make it difficult for them to do so. This led to teachers in both Gilroy's (1995, p. 8) and Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 309) studies to use excerpts from literary texts and use them as supplementary exercises when the instructional circumstances allowed.

Contrary to the previously mentioned studies which found a tendency towards using teacher-centred approaches, there is empirical research that involves student-centred approaches when teaching literature as well (Tasneen, 2010, p. 13; Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 309). When answering a questionnaire about their literature teaching practices, the participating teachers in Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 309) study believed that their instruction was focused on developing students' communicative competence. They stated that their teaching goals were more fluency-oriented than accuracy-oriented and that their activities were more student-centred rather than teacher-centred. Correspondingly, the findings in Tasneen's (2010) quantitative study indicated that the students were at the centre of the learning process. When the teachers answered a questionnaire, they expressed that they encouraged students to relate the topics and the themes in the texts to their own experiences and to express their thoughts and opinions. The activities focused on reading and writing, with an emphasis on developing students' vocabulary. Group activities were often incorporated in their teaching where students rewrote the endings of the stories, made story maps and discussed the literary texts. Students researched different topics that were related to the themes in the literary texts and some teachers used games and crossword puzzles (Tasneen, 2010, p. 13). However, it should be noted that the findings also indicated that although students did read independently and related the texts to their experiences, they still highly depended on the teacher to guide them in their understanding of the texts (p. 16).

From the previous studies presented in this section, it becomes noticeable that the approaches teachers use when incorporating literature in their teaching vary considerably. The varying methods teachers use were also acknowledged in Bloemert et al.'s (2016, p. 180) study, which aimed to identify EFL teachers' approaches to teaching literature in Dutch secondary schools. Bloemert et al. (2016, p. 180) used four foreign language literary teaching approaches as their starting point: text approach, context approach, reader approach and language approach (these being comparable to Van's (2009) New Criticism, Critical Literacy, Reader-Response and the Language-Based approaches, respectively). Although all four approaches occurred regularly in their classrooms, the findings indicated vast differences in the time spent on literature and the way teachers approach literature in their classrooms (Bloemert et al., 2016, p. 180).

4 Method and Material

The purpose of the study is to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes and practices regarding the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom. The method used is qualitative interviews with EFL teachers working at upper secondary schools in Sweden. This section outlines the chosen method and material for the present study along with the reasoning behind the decisions, organised into four subheadings. Section 4.1 explains how the qualitative interviews were carried out. This is followed by a short presentation of the participants of the study in section 4.2. Section 4.3 describes how the data analysis was conducted and finally, section 4.4 explains the ethical considerations that were taken into account in order to conduct the study following good research practice.

4.1 Qualitative Interviews

This study uses a qualitative approach utilising interviews for investigating teachers' overall attitudes about teaching literature, the methods they choose when including literature and their reasons for choosing a particular method. When researching second language classrooms, one of the purposes of using interviews is to investigate teachers' or students' opinions and attitudes regarding various aspects pertaining to language learning (McKay, 2006, p. 51).

An advantage of using qualitative interviews is also that they enable the researcher to study individual teachers' experiences, thoughts and feelings in more depth than, for example,

written surveys (Dalen, 2015, p. 14; McKay, 2006, p. 17). Therefore, quantitative methods, such as surveys, were deemed inappropriate for this study since they do not provide sufficient depth and nuance in order to answer the research questions. Although a combination of both qualitative interviews and surveys would provide a broader perspective, the aim of this study was not to gain insight into the situation in Sweden as a whole, but rather to explore the various ways in which some teachers regard literature in EFL teaching and how their practices may or may not differ.

The present study uses semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview provides a basic structure but at the same time allows the researcher some freedom. The researcher has topics and questions prepared but is free to ask the questions in a different order and, most importantly, let the interviewee speak freely and develop more detailed and extensive answers. The questions are open and the main focus is to allow the interviewee to express their views (Denscombe, 2018, p. 269). Although unstructured interviews allow for even more flexibility and a greater focus on the interviewee's opinions and experiences, the main drawback of using unstructured interviews is that the interviewer is in a way rather limited since one has to rely on the interviewee to speak extensively and might therefore not be suitable for certain candidates (Dalen, 2015, p. 34). Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, allow for a certain structure which can ease the analysis of the data collected since the interviews have followed the same main topics. Unstructured interviews generate very different interviews which makes it more difficult to find patterns in the data (McKay, 2006, p. 51).

Since semi-structured interviews were chosen, an interview guide was constructed beforehand (see Appendix A). The interview guide was divided into three main topics: (1) biodata, (2) attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom and (3) teacher practices when implementing literature. The guide consisted of 15 questions along with some potential follow-up questions. The interview guide was written in both English and Swedish in order to let the interviewee choose the language with which they were most comfortable. This was done in order to try to make the interviewee feel at ease and not having to worry about the correct terminology in either English or Swedish. Two interviews were conducted in English and five interviews in Swedish. The interview guide started with general questions about literature which were followed by more specific questions regarding particular aspects of literature teaching. Apart from avoiding leading questions, the questions were deliberately formulated in a neutral and open way which facilitated the interviewees' own interpretations

of the questions. Follow-up questions were asked when the author needed clarification or elaboration. The interview guide was not handed over to the teachers in advance so as to maintain the participants' initial, genuine and spontaneous responses (Dalen, 2015, p. 35).

Whether the interviews took place in-person or via virtual meetings varied depending on practical issues. Three of the participating teachers work at the school where the author did her practicum during the Teacher Education Programme. For this reason, these interviews took place in-person, whereas the remaining four interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom since the teachers resided in different regions in Sweden.

4.2 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of seven EFL upper secondary school teachers from various regions in Sweden. Three of these represented a sample of convenience (McKay, 2006, p. 37) since they work at the school where the author did her practicum. Since three teachers would be too few for this study, an invitation for an interview was posted on an online forum for English teachers¹ where four teachers answered that they were willing to participate. The criteria for the participants were that they were qualified teachers in English and that they were currently teaching English in upper secondary school in Sweden. The age of the teachers ranged from 26 to 39 years old, the average age being 33, and their teaching experience varied from 1 to 15 years. Five teachers were women and two teachers were men. All levels in English (English 5-7) are represented among the seven teachers. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the participants, the teachers will henceforth be named Teacher A-G. It is important to note that the participating teachers may not be representative of all teachers since they volunteered to be interviewed and are, therefore, perhaps likely to be more dedicated to teaching literature than other teachers.

4.3 Data Analysis

The interviews were all recorded and later transcribed. Recording the interviews was deemed more effective than note-taking due to the fact that note-taking does not provide a word-for-word record of the interview. Note-taking while interviewing someone can lead to the interviewer missing important information. By recording the interviews instead of taking

¹ Facebook group: Nätverk för lärare i engelska

notes, the interviewer is able to fully concentrate on the interviewee (McKay, 2006, p. 56). The transcription was done automatically using a transcription software as a means to minimise the workload. To ensure that everything was transcribed correctly, the author revisited the recordings and revised the transcriptions.

Following the transcription of the interviews, a theoretical thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) was adopted to analyse the collected data. When using a thematic analysis, the researcher attempts to construct themes through identifying patterns in the data. A theme is not identified by quantifiable measures, rather it captures an important aspect in relation to the research questions (p. 82). In contrast to an inductive approach, where the themes are based in the data themselves without trying to fit them into a specific theory, this study used a theoretical thematic analysis which constructs themes with the theoretical background and previous research in mind (pp. 83-84). The themes and subthemes identified were as follows:

- Perception of literature
 - Definition
 - Value
 - Challenges
 - Role

- Classroom application
 - Choice of literary texts
 - Classroom activities
 - Teaching goals

4.4 Ethical Considerations

In order to conduct the study following good research practice, several ethical considerations were taken into account. This was done by following national ethical guidelines (The Swedish Research Council, 2002). Before contacting the three teachers at the school where the author did her practicum, consent was granted from the headmaster of the school. After obtaining consent from the headmaster, the English teachers were contacted and asked if they were willing to participate. Care was taken to inform the participants of the purpose of the study, what their participation entailed, the confidentiality of their identities, that their participation was voluntary and of the possibility of withdrawal at any time (The Swedish Research

Council, 2002). Additionally, all of the participants consented to their interviews being recorded. The teachers that were contacted through the online forum for English teachers were privy to this information before confirming their participation, since it was stated in the invitation. They were then informed once again at the time of the virtual interview.

5 Results

This section presents the results from the semi-structured interviews with the seven participating teachers. It is divided into two subsections which represent the research questions for this study. Section 5.1 details the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom. Section 5.2 includes their practices for teaching literature.

5.1 Perception of Literature

This section presents the themes identified regarding the teachers' views of literature in the EFL classroom. It includes the various ways the teachers define literature, the value of literature teaching, the challenges that they encounter and finally, their opinions about the role that literature has in Swedish schools today.

How the teachers defined literature varied. Teacher A defined literature as any written text and exemplified that he considers comic books and song lyrics to be literature. He stated that if his students are interested in, for instance, Spider-Man, he would include some comic books for them to read in class. Teacher D suggested that literature is any form of media, stating that he has used computer games as literature in his teaching. Similarly, teachers C and F viewed literature as any written work that tells a story. However, when thinking about literature in an educational context, Teacher C mentioned that she defines literature as fiction (e.g. novels and short stories). The remaining teachers (teachers B, E and F) restricted their definition of literature to novels, short stories and poetry.

When asked about the value of teaching literature in an EFL context, all of the teachers had highly positive attitudes. The teachers acknowledged that literature is of great value in the EFL classroom, where some of the teachers stated that students can learn essentially "everything" from reading and studying literature. While they were unanimous in considering literature as an important part of English language learning, they highlighted different benefits of the inclusion of literature. The first one being that literature develops students' language. Teacher A explained that students can learn about language history,

grammar, sentence construction, phonology and etymology. Similarly, both teachers D and E highlighted that literature helps develop students' language. Teacher E further stated that it allows students to improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary, linguistic accuracy and that they learn about different genres of writing. Vocabulary was also an aspect that teachers F and G stressed as an important benefit of reading literature in the language classroom. Additionally, Teacher F expressed that literature provides meaningful language input where students are exposed to important language aspects such as grammar and punctuation. She continued to point out that literature also creates opportunities for group discussions where students can practice their speaking skills. Moreover, Teacher G emphasised that when students read literature, they experience authors' different ways of expressing themselves, which leads to a broader understanding of English as a language.

When asked about the learning benefits of reading literature, Teacher B was the only one who did not mention language development. She viewed increasing students' cultural awareness as the main advantage of teaching literature, which was a view that was shared among the majority of the participants. Teacher B asserted that students can learn about norms, traditions, cultures, living conditions in various countries and time periods for different people. Although Teacher C mentioned language aspects as an important benefit of using literature in the language classroom, she stated that building students' empathy is of greater importance. Gaining perspectives from different people's experiences and places and learning to understand other people's situations were aspects that she viewed as highly important in relation to reading literature. Correspondingly, this was reiterated by teachers D, G and E, where they stressed that literature can develop students' intercultural awareness. They stated that when students read, they learn about different contexts and relate them to their own.

The value of incorporating literature in EFL teaching was also explained by the fact that literature allows for personal growth. Not only does literature add to students' perspectives of the world, according to teachers B and F, it also permits students to explore their own thoughts and attitudes towards life in general. Teacher F continued to suggest that literature helps students understand how something written some time ago can still be relevant in today's world.

When asked about any potential disadvantages of incorporating literature in their teaching, the teachers did not see any. However, in order for literature teaching to be meaningful, four teachers (C, D, F and G) pointed out the importance of the teacher's

approach to literature. Teacher C stated that, as a teacher, one has to be extremely cautious with how one introduces and approaches literature. She mentioned the fact that many students are unmotivated to read and if one approaches literature in an inadequate way, there is a risk of reinforcing students' negative attitudes towards reading literature. Furthermore, according to Teacher D, there is a risk in the selection of texts if the teacher misjudges the students' levels and prior knowledge. Teacher F argued that if one uses an ineffective approach or chooses an inappropriate literary text, some students may never read a book again. This risk was reiterated by Teacher G, where she pointed out the significance of incorporating literature in an engaging and interesting way. According to her, one has to keep students' interests, thoughts and perspectives in mind. If not, students will not be motivated to read.

Although the teachers were highly positive to the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom and emphasised different learning benefits, they also acknowledged that there are various challenges. For instance, teachers A, C and F all raised the aspect of adapting literature to the students' levels as a substantial challenge. Teacher A highlighted the difficulty of adapting literature teaching to the students' proficiency levels, especially when the texts are of an older literary era where the language can be quite complex. Finding literary texts that will be appropriate level-wise to every student was an aspect that teachers C and F found challenging. Teacher C contemplated whether or not one should use the same book for a whole class or whether students should be allowed to choose books for themselves.

Another perceived challenge among a few teachers was motivating their students. Catching students' attention and interest when teaching literature was perceived as challenging among teachers B, E and G. Teacher G continued to state that students are generally quite suspicious towards literature and that the culture of reading is not present among a lot of students. This ties in with another difficulty which concerns students' unwillingness to read. Getting students to read and motivating them to finish a book were difficulties that a number of teachers pointed out. The fact that students tend to look for a short cut and choose to watch the film adaptation instead of reading the book was exemplified by both teachers E and F. Moreover, Teacher E emphasised that students are not accustomed to reading literature today. Teacher G stressed that many students lack the reading strategies necessary to fulfil a literature project.

Additionally, a problem regarding the examination of students after completing a literature project was brought up by teachers B and C. In their experience, it is at times difficult to discern whether or not students' opinions and analysis are their own since they can

easily find a plethora of reviews and literary analyses on the Internet. Furthermore, the time aspect of literature teaching was highlighted by teachers D and E. They indicated that literature projects are often long and are highly time-consuming, especially with students who find reading challenging.

When asked about the role that literature has in Swedish schools today, the teachers had varying views. Teacher A argued that students read and write too little today and that it shows in their language development. He exemplified the fact that students' spelling accuracy has worsened. Correspondingly, teachers E and F argued that literature should have a bigger role in the syllabus. Teacher E stated that students' reading comprehension and vocabulary are deteriorating and that there is a need for more reading in general. Teacher F mentioned that teachers should use literature in a more extensive way instead of using textbooks since, according to her, literature "can do more than a textbook can do".

Teacher B compared the role of literature today with its role a few years ago. Earlier in her teacher career, students were required to read about two novels each course. However, today, the syllabus for English is quite vague which leaves a great deal of freedom for teachers to choose how they incorporate literature in their teaching. She expressed that it is a shame that students generally do not read a novel in its entirety. However, she also acknowledged that using excerpts and short stories instead of longer texts has worked more effectively in her experience. Teacher C also held the opinion that it is regrettable that pure literature teaching is increasingly disappearing, especially given the fact that many students have difficulties with reading comprehension. In a way, she would appreciate it if the syllabus included that students are required to read at least one novel, since currently, it is merely stated that "literature and other types of fiction" should be incorporated (Skolverket, 2020, p. 2). Teacher C continued to state that she believes literature is an extremely important part of language teaching and that she wishes to include it more extensively than she does today.

Teacher D viewed the freedom provided by the syllabus positively, stating that it allows teachers to include a great amount of literature if one wishes to do so. However, he lacked some form of literary canon in the syllabus where it is clearly stated what type of texts should be read. He explained that this would, in his opinion, increase equality in schools. Wanting a clearer and more defined role in the syllabus was also mentioned by Teacher G. She expressed that she found the syllabus to be abstract with respect to the use of literature and explained that she was in need of more guidance from both the Teacher Education and colleagues regarding pedagogical approaches to teaching literature.

5.2 Classroom Application

This section outlines the teachers' practices for teaching literature. It presents different factors that affect their choice of literary texts, their overall classroom activities and their main teaching goals when using literature in the EFL classroom. It should be noted that all of the teachers stressed the fact that their overall teaching practices vary depending on the group of students, the English course and the literary text that they are working with. The results and themes presented in this chapter represent some examples that the teachers mentioned.

When asked about their overall thought processes regarding the choice of literary texts, the teachers highlighted different factors that affect their choices. Teacher A began by mentioning the fact that in order for him to use a text in the classroom, the text needs to have some depth since it needs to provide opportunities for analysis. He also explained that his personal interests affect the texts that he uses in his classroom. This was a factor that teachers B and G highlighted as well. Teacher G added that she also takes her students' interests into consideration since it would not be appropriate if she only used her own interest as a point of departure. She expressed that she chooses texts that her students can relate to, for instance, texts that cover universal themes. Similarly, Teacher B highlighted the importance of choosing texts that connect to the students' lives, exemplifying texts that include youth perspectives. Teacher D mentioned that he usually adapts his teaching, and the texts he chooses, to the students' choice of programme in upper secondary school.

Furthermore, a few of the teachers emphasised the fact that the literary texts must be language appropriate. When choosing which texts to include in their teaching, teachers C, D, F and G consider the level of the language and whether it fits into the students' level of proficiency. According to these teachers, the texts need to be appropriate level-wise both with regard to the group of students and the English course that they are studying. Only Teacher B pointed out how accessibility affects her choice of literature. If the school has accessible literature in terms of class sets, she tends to use them in her teaching since she emphasised that one cannot buy new class sets every school year.

The majority of the teachers stated that they try to include texts from all over the world. Including texts from English-speaking countries that are not British or American was an aspect that Teacher B considered important. Her goal is to have a broad and inclusive perspective when choosing texts to work with in her classroom. Correspondingly, teachers C, E and F stated that broadening students' perspectives is essential when teaching literature and

therefore, they include texts by authors who are not always British or American. Teacher C exemplified that she wants her students to understand how the author can affect the perspectives and narratives represented in the text. Teacher E pointed out the importance of including authors from different backgrounds and Teacher F stressed the significance of exposing students to different varieties of English. Teacher G, on the other hand, described that she is not restricted by texts from English-speaking countries. She explained that she tries to include examples of literature that does not describe different parts of the world from a Western perspective, rather she incorporates works translated from many different parts of the world, for example, South America, Africa and the Middle East. She would describe her choice of literature as world literature.

When discussing how the teachers introduce literature to their students, all of the teachers exemplified that one of the various ways in which they introduce a literature project is to present the context of the literary text. That could be done by discussing the author's country of origin, the era in which the text was written or highlighting the main theme in the text. Teachers D and G stressed the importance of having a few introductory lessons where the teacher builds the students' anticipation and knowledge before starting to read. In contrast, teachers B and C mentioned that they at times introduce literature by starting to read the very first lesson. Additionally, teachers A, E and G described that they also find it essential to explain the purpose of reading literature to the students. Teacher G stated that she introduces a literature theme by tackling students' misconceptions and suspicions first.

Regarding the teachers' classroom activities, their teaching varied considerably; however, some similarities were identified. Teacher A explained that he usually varies his literature teaching in three different ways: homework on a specific number of pages, individual reading in class, or he reads aloud. Letting the students come to their own conclusions and interpreting the text in their own way were aspects that he focuses on in his instruction. As a result, he spends a great deal of time developing students' ability to analyse and interpret texts. In Teacher A's teaching, the students usually answer some questions about the text individually, followed by group discussions and finally discussions together in class.

Teacher B detailed that previously in her teaching career, she used to give the students homework and require them to read at home, however, with experience she noticed that reading an entire text in class, especially reading the text together, is much more effective. In this way, nearly all of her students achieved the learning goals and passed the examination. Teacher B tries to vary her classroom activities as much as possible by discussing the themes

in the text, answering questions, letting the students choose quotes, scheduling literature seminars etc. In a similar manner, Teacher D never gives his students reading homework, rather he was adamant in explaining how important it is to read literary texts during class. He described that he sees reading as a process that they should go through together. According to Teacher D, if students are left to read the text individually, some students will read the text without encountering any problems whereas other students will not be able to read past the first paragraph. His teaching activities vary significantly depending on the English course. In English 5, his role as a teacher is more important at the level of detail where the main focus is on reading comprehension, whereas in English 7, the focus is on learning about literature in general and literary analysis. Similarly, Teacher C explained that her teaching in English 5 is noticeably more teacher-centred compared to English 7, where she is able to let the students have more freedom. Her teaching varies where she sometimes focuses on, for example, grammar and vocabulary and other times on the themes in the text. Teacher F also mentioned that as a teacher, one has to allot a great deal of lesson time to reading, otherwise there is a risk of students not reading at all. She usually lets her students discuss the texts in groups and asks open questions.

Teacher E described a structured lesson plan where the students read one chapter at a time. After reading each chapter, the students answer some questions and summarise the chapter together. She stated that structuring the lessons in this way allows the students to be engaged in the learning process and helps students read the book in its entirety. Teacher E described herself as a guide who points out important aspects of the literary texts and allows her students to voice their thoughts about the texts. Contrary to Teacher E, Teacher G allows her students a great deal of freedom but within clear frames. She asks her students in what ways they read most effectively and allows them to structure their reading process independently. Additionally, Teacher G placed great emphasis on letting students develop their own interpretation of the literary text. The teacher explained:

If I were to structure up what they should look for after every chapter through, for example, reading comprehension questions... If I were to tell them to focus on this during that chapter, then they won't be able to kind of develop their own individual understanding of the text because I'm constantly guiding them at exactly: 'look for this', 'think like this', 'analyse this'. Kind of pushing my own thoughts, structure and ideas on them instead of them being able to actually develop their own interpretation.

When asked about their main teaching goals, developing students' language was a common goal among the teachers. Teacher A mentioned that his main goal is not usually to teach his students about different literary eras, rather his focus is to develop students' language skills. Similarly, teachers B, C and E also highlighted language aspects as one of their main teaching goals when using literature. They exemplified, among other things, formal and informal language, grammar and vocabulary. Teacher F expressed that she always uses literature to teach language aspects. She would often require her students to pay attention to different linguistic aspects in the literary text, such as comma usage.

Contrary to Teacher F, who always uses literature to develop her students' language, Teacher G stated that her main goal when teaching literature is seldom to teach language aspects. Instead, her main goal is to increase students' intercultural awareness and understanding of the world. In her teaching, she tries to promote an understanding and respect of other peoples and cultures and an "openness to the unknown". She stated that when using literature, "learning English is a bonus". Additionally, she expressed that she would describe her main teaching perspective as critical literacy rather than focusing on different genres and authors. Correspondingly, apart from language aspects, teachers C and E also stated that increasing students' cultural awareness, knowledge of the world and building their empathy were some of their main teaching goals. They expressed that the text in itself is not the main focus, rather how the text can add to one's view of the world.

Although both teachers B and C described that they used to spend a great deal of time teaching about different literary eras, they have increasingly moved away from it and focus on other learning aspects in their teaching today. Teacher B exemplified that she focuses on different themes, exemplifying feminism and colonialism. Nevertheless, they both mentioned that there are some aspects of general knowledge that students should be aware of, for example, both teachers stated that "you should know who Shakespeare is".

Finally, another teaching goal that was highlighted by teachers C and G was making students aware of various reading strategies. They both stressed the importance of discussing reading strategies with their students and teaching them that different types of texts require different strategies. Furthermore, teachers C, G and F stressed the importance of making literature teaching relevant, interesting and motivating. Some of their main teaching goals are to spark an interest in reading and encouraging students to read for pleasure.

6 Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

Although the aim of this study is not to investigate the situation in Sweden as a whole, but rather to explore the various ways in which a selected group of teachers perceive and use literature in the EFL classroom, some observations that allow for a discussion can still be made. Using previous research and the research questions of the present study as a starting point, this section will provide a discussion based on the data collected. Finally, some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers will also be highlighted.

First off, all of the participating teachers had highly positive attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom. They acknowledged the potential value of its implementation and exemplified many learning benefits. While this result corresponds with various empirical studies (e.g. Kayaoğlu et al., 2012; Wasanasomsithi, 1998; Calafato & Paran, 2019), it also contradicts some previous research which has shown teachers' reluctance to use literature where they seriously questioned its relevance and effectiveness in the EFL classroom (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 310; Kayaoğlu et al., 2012, p. 187). This view was mainly due to the teachers perceiving literature to be too difficult for their students. The students' low proficiency level constituted the most important challenge (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017, p. 87; Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 310). These studies were conducted in Turkey and Malaysia where students' proficiency in English may be considerably lower than in Sweden. Moreover, some of the previous research included in this study are not very recent. These two aspects could have affected the teachers' attitudes and could explain the fact that the teachers participating in the present study did not question the relevance of using literature in the EFL classroom since their students may have a higher level of proficiency.

The majority of the teachers in this study highlighted that literature can develop students' language. This perception corresponds with Gilroy's (1995, p. 6), Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 311), Calafato and Paran's (2019, p. 35) and Tasneen's (2010, p. 14) findings. The teachers exemplified that literature provides valuable language input and can help improve students' grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, five teachers also stated that one of the main values of using literature in the EFL classroom is that it increases students' cultural awareness and builds their empathy, which was also found in previous studies (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 311; Calafato & Paran, 2019, p. 35).

Although the participants were positive towards the use of literature, they highlighted many difficulties. This could point to a perception that even though they acknowledge that literature has great value, they view literature teaching as quite a challenging aspect of EFL

teaching and that, as a teacher, one has to be cautious with how one approaches literature in the classroom. Interestingly, nearly all of the challenges mentioned by the teachers in this study can be found in previous research. Adapting literature teaching and finding literary texts suitable to students' proficiency levels (Tasneen, 2010, p. 1; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017, p. 87; Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 310), motivating students to read (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, pp. 310-311; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017, p. 87) and that literature is highly time-consuming (Wasanasomsithi, 1998, p. 311) were challenges that the teachers described. The only challenge that was not found in existing research was the risk of plagiarism regarding examinations that was brought up by teachers B and C.

The teachers either held the opinion that literature should have a more substantial role in the syllabus or that it should be clearly defined how much and what type of literature is to be included. A slight tendency towards a perception that the syllabus should include specific guidelines for teachers to follow was identified. As Teacher D exemplified, the vagueness in the syllabus regarding literature leads to teachers implementing literature in varying ways. He stated that for the sake of increasing equality between schools, a literary canon may be favourable. Although the teachers did not identify any specific disadvantages regarding the use of literature, four teachers did stress the importance of using an adequate pedagogical approach where the teacher keeps the students' prior knowledge and language proficiency in mind. This points to a perception that the teacher's approach and view of literature is crucial for literature teaching to be effective.

All of the teachers explained that their teaching varies considerably depending on the group of students, the English course and the literary text that they are working with. This suggests that the teachers find it highly important to keep their students in mind and adapt their teaching in order for it to be meaningful. For example, three teachers highlighted the importance of choosing texts that their students would find interesting or texts that they could relate to. Teachers C and G consistently pointed out that one must make literature teaching relevant to the students. In addition, four teachers stressed the significance of choosing texts that are appropriate language-wise.

Contrary to some existing research which found that teachers tend to use a teacher-centred approach where literature is viewed as a means for students to learn about art and literature in general (Rashid et al., 2010; Suliman et al., 2019; Hwang & Embi, 2007; Akyel & Yalçın, 1990, p. 176), one could indicate a pattern among the participants that their main goal when teaching literature is not to teach different literary eras and genres. Rather, they use

literature as a tool to teach something else, whether it is language aspects or cultural awareness. The findings in this study correspond with Tasneen's (2010, p. 13) and Wasanasomsithi's (1998, p. 309) studies, where great focus is placed on the students and letting them voice their thoughts and opinions. All of the teachers participating in this study mentioned discussions and allowing for different interpretations. This is in line with Van's (2009, pp. 5-6) Reader-Response approach where students take an active role in interpreting the literary text. The teachers that stood out were teachers F and G. While Teacher F was the only one to mention that she always uses literature to teach language aspects, Teacher G seldom includes literature to develop students' language proficiency. Instead, Teacher G's main goal when using literature is to broaden students' perspectives and promote an understanding and respect of other cultures. Teacher F's approach to teaching literature can be interpreted as Carter and Long's (as cited in Savvidou, 2004) Language model or Van's (2009, p. 7) Language-Based approach, while Teacher G's perspective might coincide with Critical Literacy and the Cultural model.

Further differences regarding the teachers' specific teaching methods were identified. For example, one important aspect that differed between the teachers was their perceptions regarding homework. While Teacher A mentioned that he sometimes gives students a specific number of pages as homework, teachers B and D had negative attitudes towards homework. They expressed the fact that, in their experience, reading a text in its entirety in class is much more effective since more students will be able to read the entire text, and thus, achieve the learning goals. Moreover, another method that differed between teachers E and G was how they structured their lessons. Teacher E found it important to guide her students by reading one chapter at a time, followed by discussions and writing summaries. In this way, she found that her students were able to read the literary text in its entirety. Teacher G, on the other hand, was negative towards such a method since, in her opinion, it would hinder her students' ability to fully interpret the text in their own way. These differing opinions suggest a discrepancy among teachers, both in terms of teachers' main goals and their pedagogical approaches for teaching literature.

All in all, the findings in this study point to several interesting pedagogical implications for EFL teachers in Sweden. It is apparent that teachers view literature as a valuable tool in EFL teaching and learning. Teachers see a number of learning benefits and express the importance of incorporating literature in the EFL classroom. However, they identify a number of difficulties which make literature teaching challenging. The fact that

essentially all of the challenges they mentioned can be found in existing research suggests that the challenges teachers encounter do not vary very much depending on the country or the level of the students. There is perhaps a need for teachers to gain more knowledge about literature teaching overall. Issues relating to students being unwilling to read books in their entirety and challenges regarding adapting literature teaching to the students' levels are prominent difficulties that EFL teachers face. It would, therefore, be highly valuable to address these issues in a more extensive manner in Swedish schools today.

Their goals for teaching literature and the approach they choose seem to differ, which suggests a need for teachers to reflect on the reasons for teaching literature and the approach that they apply. Nevertheless, they all seem to share the idea that teaching literature in itself, that is teaching about different literary eras and authors, was not their main teaching goal. They all described that they use literature to teach or promote other aspects, such as language development or cultural awareness. Although teachers are required to teach about different literary eras (e.g. in English 6), the findings suggest a pattern that more traditional literature teaching seems to take a smaller role and is replaced by an approach that focuses on different themes and universal topics that generate discussions.

The teachers also describe a want for more direct guidelines from the syllabus regarding which type of literature is to be included along with how and to what extent it should be used. The vagueness in the syllabus allows for many interpretations which leads to teachers incorporating literature in varying ways. Perhaps there is a need for a common approach to literature which would facilitate EFL teachers' instruction and also increase the educational equality of literature teaching in Swedish schools.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate upper secondary EFL teachers' attitudes and practices for teaching literature. From the findings in this study, it can be concluded that teachers have highly positive attitudes towards the use of literature in the EFL classroom in that they acknowledge the value of its inclusion and highlight many learning benefits. For instance, they point out that literature can develop students' language, increase cultural awareness, stimulate personal growth and promote a greater understanding of the world at large. However, the findings also suggest that teachers identify many challenges regarding the teaching of literature. They highlight the difficulty of adapting literature teaching and finding literary texts suitable to students' levels of proficiency, motivating students to read, the risk of

plagiarism and the fact that literature teaching is highly time-consuming. They stress the importance of having an adequate pedagogical approach where the teacher keeps the students' prior knowledge and interests in mind. Regarding teachers' practices for teaching literature, it can be concluded that teachers seem to have varying goals and pedagogical approaches for teaching literature. The findings did not reveal a common approach among the teachers. However, they all seem to use literature as a tool to teach various aspects of language and culture rather than focusing on teaching literature in itself.

This study sheds some light on the various ways in which teachers perceive the use of literature in the EFL classroom and highlights some discrepancies among teachers regarding their classroom application. Additionally, it adds knowledge to a research field that is rather limited. Hence, further research is needed to gain a broader understanding of the use of literature in an EFL context, though e.g. classroom observations, especially regarding teachers' goals, practices and their motivations for a chosen approach. It would be interesting to compare the findings of this qualitative study with a quantitative study including a broader population in Sweden where teachers' attitudes and practices are further explored. A large-scale study would allow for more reliable and generalisable conclusions. Moreover, studies focusing on how students' level of proficiency may affect teachers' attitudes towards the use of literature in an EFL context would add additional knowledge to this research field. It would also be of interest to further explore if teachers in general would prefer more guidance from the syllabus and whether or not they would find implementing a literary canon to be advantageous.

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Appendix A

Background

- How old are you?
- What is your educational background?
- How long have you worked as an English teacher?
- What levels of English have you taught?

Attitudes

- What is literature according to you? What does it mean to you?
- What can students learn from reading/studying literature in the English classroom in your opinion?
- Are there any disadvantages of including literature in the English classroom according to you?
- What challenges are there in your opinion?
- Do you believe literature should have a bigger or smaller role in the English courses in upper secondary school? Why is that? OR Do you believe literature should have a different role than it has today in upper secondary school? Why is that?

Practices

- What types of texts/literary works do you include in your teaching?
 - What factors affect your choices? What criteria are needed?
- How do you introduce literature to your students?
- How do you generally approach literature in your teaching?
 - Does the type of text or genre affect the way you approach it in the classroom?
 - How do the students work with the texts?
 - What role do you have as a teacher?
- What are your main teaching goals when you include literature in your teaching?
 - Do you want your students to gain knowledge about literature in itself or do you use literature as a medium for instruction (i.e. using literature to teach something else)? Or perhaps both?
 - Is the context surrounding the text important for students to understand?
 - What do you focus on? Language, content, history, analysis etc?
- Why have you chosen to work with literature in this way?
- Is there anything you would like to add?