

The Role of Literary Texts in Swedish Upper Secondary EFL Education

The Teacher Perspective

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Abstract

The English syllabus at the upper secondary level in Sweden stipulates that literary texts should be included in the lesson content at all three levels of English, but their role is not clearly defined. The overarching aim of the study is thus to examine the role of literary texts in upper secondary EFL education from the EFL teachers' perspective, in order to discuss the relationship between curricular stipulations and EFL teachers' decisions and approaches. The study relies on a mixed methods approach involving both a quantitative part (phase I - questionnaire) and a qualitative part (phase II - interviews). Key findings from phase I of the study suggest that literary texts are primarily used to improve reading comprehension in English 5 while the development of literary skills becomes increasingly important in English 6 and English 7. The results from phase II of the study show that while one teacher uses mainly contemporary texts at all levels of English another includes older literary texts already in English 5. Moreover, the findings further reveal both similar and different views of the functions of and approaches to literary texts based on *EFL repertoires* (teachers' beliefs about literary texts linked to the syllabus of English) and *teacher literary repertoires* (teachers' beliefs about literary texts not firmly linked to the syllabus of English) but also due to the idea of *protracted curricula* (the influence of expired curricula).¹ For instance, while one teacher may prioritize language skills another may emphasize the significance of literary skills when working with literary texts. Nevertheless, results from both phases of the study point to a general consensus as to the importance of student-centered, collaborative forms of engagement where, for example, affective response and critical thinking are in focus. The present study highlights a need for a continued national debate on the role of literary texts in EFL.

Keywords: *literary texts in EFL, text selection, functions, approaches, upper secondary level, literature teaching and learning, the teacher perspective, mixed methods, EFL repertoires, teacher literary repertoires, protracted curricula, student-centered teaching, collaborative engagement*

¹ New constructs created for the present study inspired by McCormick's (1994) reading theory and Goodlad et al.'s (1979) curricular domains.