Approaches to English literature in the upper secondary school classroom
A study from an EFL/ESL perspective

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Abstract:

This is a qualitative study about how literature is used in the subject of English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) in the upper secondary school classroom. The study specifically focuses on what goals and activities are ascribed to the use of literature in the English language classroom. Literature has been used in the Swedish language classroom for decades but there is still an uncertainty as to how literature can and could be used. The aim for this thesis was to achieve an understanding of teacher’s choices when it came to goals and activities linked to the EFL/ESL classroom. This is a literature review where primary sources have been analyzed using critical literacy and cultural theory to specify the different authors stand-point about the use of literature. Background information also provides a basis for the analysis where authors dedicated to the use of literature in the language classroom discuss and describe general concepts and ideas of how literature is used and could or should be used. The study showed that depending on the teacher’s goals with literature different methods and activities are linked to the lessons. Critical literacy and cultural theory helped develop an understanding of the thoughts and ideas underpinning the concepts of the primary sources, whether it was about altering students’ behavior or fostering democratic and empathetic citizens. The results showed that literature is used in a variety of ways, but at times the student-oriented goals and activities are unclear. This calls for further research on the area of using literature in the EFL/ESL classroom.

Keywords: literature, teaching methods, upper secondary school, EFL/ESL
# Table of contents:

1. Introduction......................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1. Aim of the thesis ........................................................................................................... 1  
      1.1.1. Research questions................................................................................................. 1  
2. Background.......................................................................................................................... 2  
   2.1. English literature in the Swedish curriculum and CEFR ........................................... 2  
   2.2. The value of literature in the language classroom and beyond .................................... 3  
   2.3. Literature in a foreign language/second language ....................................................... 5  
3. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................................... 6  
   3.1. Critical literacy ............................................................................................................ 6  
   3.2. Sociocultural theory .................................................................................................... 7  
4. Method and material............................................................................................................ 8  
   4.1. Design ........................................................................................................................ 8  
      4.1.1. Exposition of primary sources ................................................................................ 9  
      4.1.2. Ethical aspects ....................................................................................................... 10  
5. Result.................................................................................................................................. 10  
   5.1. Content analysis .......................................................................................................... 13  
      5.1.1. What goals are ascribed to the teaching of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom? .... 13  
      5.1.2. What activities are linked to the teaching of English literature in the ESL/EFL classroom? 14  
6. Discussion .......................................................................................................................... 14  
   6.1. Suggestions for future research .................................................................................... 16  
7. Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 16  
8. References .......................................................................................................................... 18
1. Introduction

Teaching English literature in the second language classroom for upper secondary school students often comes with a general prejudice that students are not interested in literature. There is also a common belief among students and teachers that literature is mainly taught in one way, namely by students handing in a report, briefly retelling the story, and giving their own opinion on what has been read. From the author’s experiences of studying literature at university and adapting these methods to the author’s own English classroom I believe that further and easily accessible knowledge of different methods for teaching literature are needed to improve teachers’ competence within the subject. This new knowledge could be acquired by teachers learning from each other by using studies or attending courses available for further development. Therefore, this study will take on a teacher perspective and focus on choices teachers must face when teaching literature. Teachers need to choose both what literature should be read and in what way it is to be used in the classroom. The Swedish curriculum in English for Upper Secondary school advocates for students to have the opportunity to learn and understand both spoken and written English (Skolverket 2011a, pp. 1-2). The introduction for the subject English in the Swedish curriculum does not mention literature or fiction as a part of the subject until further on in the core content. It is also important to mention the lack of clarity about what is supposed to be taught in the Swedish curriculum. This is something that Lundahl (2012) has also noticed in both the core content for secondary school and upper secondary school. Lundahl says that a lot of focus is aimed towards a discourse perspective on texts where the main objective is to study their structure. He also points out that there is no reference in the knowledge requirements to how students are supposed to show their understanding of what they have read, neither does it correspond to how CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment) describes the different scales of progression (pp. 225-226;228).

This study takes the form of a literature review where previous research on how English literature is used in the second language classroom will be analyzed. The search for primary material has focused on variation in teaching and not on one single method. To fully understand what it means to teach literature and different aspects of it, the background material will give a base of what is expected from the curriculum and CEFR framework to be a part of the teaching of literature in the English subject. The background will also present an overview of what literature means for the classroom and give examples of which approaches are the most common in the second language classroom, and what these approaches mean for students and teachers. Since the research is focused on how we use literature in the EFL/ESL classroom the theoretical approach will be that of critical literacy and social cultural theory, why and how we use literature for a variety of reasons.

Since it is difficult to say whether Swedish students use English as a foreign language or as a second language, I choose to use both EFL and ESL in my research to cover the diversity of the classroom.

1.1. Aim of the thesis

The aim for this study is to explore how literature is used in EFL/ESL classrooms for upper secondary school. The study aims to show the use of literature and the choices made by teachers.

1.1.1. Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:
• What goals are ascribed to the teaching of English literature in the EFL/ESL classroom?
• What activities are linked to the teaching of English literature in the EFL/ESL classroom?

2. Background

The following subsections will provide a background for the teaching of literature and some approaches commonly used in literary education.

2.1. English literature in the Swedish curriculum and CEFR

It is firstly important to look at how literature is regarded in the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school. The aim of the subject English in the Swedish curriculum is for students to develop knowledge in the language and the world around them, to feel confident using the language for different purposes and situations. Students should develop all-round communicative skills to cover reception, communication and, production and interaction in the core content. In the introduction to the English courses Skolverket (2011a) lifts the importance of realizing cultural and social differences as well as the importance of acquiring new perspectives of the world in which the students live (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 1). In the central content of the curriculum it is explained what kind of literary content should be a part of education:

• English 5 – Communication: Different types and forms of fiction.
• Reception: Literature and other type of fiction.
• English 6 – Communication: Ideas, forms, themes and content in literature and film; authorship and literary eras.
• Reception: Contemporary and older literature, drama, poems, and lyrics.
• English 7 – Reception: Contemporary and older literature as well as fiction from different genres.

Both communication and reception conveys fiction and other types of texts as a medium which should be taught in the EFL/ESL classroom. Furthermore, the aim of the English subject advocates that students should “meet written and spoken English of different kinds, and relate the content to their own experiences and knowledge”. In addition, students are required to learn to use different strategies as a means of improving their ability to read and listen, both in order to find information and to think critically (Skolverket, 2011c). It is to be noted that literature is not mentioned in the Knowledge Requirements for any of the English courses in the Swedish curriculum.

The CEFR is the basis for many European countries syllabus and curriculum guidelines. The CEFR was first and foremost established for narrowing the differences in language proficiency which arose from the different education systems all over Europe (CEFR, 2001, p.1). The Swedish educational system has developed its own stages of knowledge requirements but these stages are a direct development of those asserted in CERF (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 1). There is a focus in CEFR on awareness and knowledge of sociocultural and intercultural differences and also an understanding of people’s lifestyles and cultural traditions. In the same way the Swedish curriculum also sees culture as something which can be viewed through and taught through literature, theater and art. Students should develop knowledge about different cultures and lifestyles (Skolverket 2011b, pp. 6-7). In the CEFR, literature or texts can be seen in the common reference level: global scale (CEFR, 2001, pp. 24-26) where scales B1.2 to B2.2
are related to stages 5 to 7 in the Swedish curriculum for the English subject (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 2). According to CEFR with regards to texts of different sorts, students of the B1 level should be able to “[…] collate short pieces of information from several sources and summarise them for somebody else, […] paraphrase short written passages in a simple fashion, using the original text wording and ordering”, B2 should be able to “[…] summarise a wide range of factual and imaginative texts, commenting on and discussing contrasting points of view and the main themes, […] summarise extracts from news items, interviews or documentaries containing opinions, argument and discussion, […] summarise the plot and sequence of events in a film or play” (CEFR, 2001, p. 96). Furthermore, the texts which CEFR explains should be studied according to the different stages related to the Swedish curriculum of English are:

- B1.2 – can understand text regarding familiar topics, can communicate on familiar topics.
- B2.1 – can understand and comment on contemporary articles and reports. Can understand literary prose.
- 2.2 – can understand and comment on contemporary articles and reports. Can understand literary prose (CEFR, 2001, pp. 24-26).

Both the Swedish curriculum and CEFR comment on reception and communication. According to Lundahl (2012) there is no progression from secondary school to upper secondary school in the Swedish curriculum for how students should show their understanding of what they have read, but rather a progression in the complexity of the texts (pp. 228-229). The same can be seen in the above quotes taken from CEFR. As Skolverket and CEFR point out, literature can be an instrument to connect to the surrounding world. That is something Langer (2005) and Bruns (2001) also point out.

### 2.2. The value of literature in the language classroom and beyond

According to Langer (2005) literature helps students recollect their own as well as other’s potential in the world. Literature can be a way of finding one’s own identity or even to make a change. Literacy is the means of using language to create and mediate ideas which in turn requires different perspectives of reading. Bruns (2001) says, just as Langer (2005) that “learning to read literature helps us to read the world”, not only in the language classroom but in general to help people understand the world around them (p. 11). Furthermore, Bruns (2001) explains that literature helps people find ways to explain people’s behavior, feelings, thoughts and beliefs. It is about making sense of the people and the world around us (Bruns, 2001, pp. 12-13). Both the Swedish curriculum and CEFR point out literature’s importance when it comes to the understanding of different cultural aspects as well as understanding the people and the world around us, as described in the section above.

Literacy theory according to Langer (2005) enables students to manipulate language and thoughts to regard, create and change both themselves and their surroundings in meaningful ways and from that have the possibility to find one’s place in the world. When using literacy in the language classroom it is possible to provide students with the tools needed to contemplate about their lives and the world, and to rethink or re-evaluate previous conceptions of both themselves or texts they have read (Langer, 2005, p. 13). Langer (2005) focuses on English as an L1 in her research, despite this, Bo Lundahl (2012), is interested in Langer’s approach to literary theory, reader-response, that it is the reader who creates their own understanding at the same time as the reader is limited by interpretation and cultural aspect. Lundahl (2012) continues by emphasizing Langer’s position about literature in the classroom that the possibilities of reading should be that which is prevalent and not absolute truths about literary works. This is only possible when students are allowed to act and react to that which is read.
This can be done in the classroom by using both cognitive and creative questions directly following the reading of the text (Lundahl, 2012, p. 262).

Langer (2005) says that literature can be viewed in two different ways, either as something objective where we evaluate emotions, events and ideas and try to see how they can relate to one another. It can on the other hand be viewed as something subjective where we try to relate the content of a literary work to ourselves and how observations can shift from individual to individual (Langer 2005, p. 18). Bruns (2001) agrees with Langer (2005) on this aspect, she says that not only does literature send messages of empathy towards us but it also describes and discusses moral codes such as values and perspectives that might help us become better people (pp. 12-13). Langer (2005) points out the problematic picture of schools being seen as using both the subjective and objective view when reading literature while in reality; the subjective form is rather uncommon. Langer (2005) advocates that both approaches should be taught and that students can learn to distinguish and practice them simultaneously. However, shallow reading and understanding of basic ideas are more common and do not bring forth the student’s own intellect but questions with fixed answers. Langer (2005) says that focus needs to be set on the student and his or her ability to think (Langer, 2005, p 77).

The kind of teaching that Langer (2005) promotes is something that she says might seem frightening for some teachers; it is something they are not used to. The most important aspect is to learn to listen to one’s students and allow them to share their own thoughts and ideas. As a teacher, it is far too simple to go back to the old ways of teaching because they give a sense of security. But Langer says that old habits make us work in the wrong direction, away from student-based goals and are in direct conflict with the pedagogical goals to help students think for themselves. This is where objective and subjective approaches can help teachers re-evaluate old habits and ways of teaching (Langer 2005, pp 110-111). Furthermore, Bruns (2001) says that even though literature can be a useful instrument in the classroom to convey values, these values can also be used in the literary classroom to alter how a person conceptualizes themselves as well as others. However, Bruns (2001) also stresses that a student cannot be taught how to make these realizations because it is an unconscious process (p. 79).

Bruns (2001) explains and also critiques a common method of teaching literature and what effects it has on students. Just as Langer (2005), Bruns (2001) critiques the teacher centered classroom where the teacher informs students about how the text can and should be understood. Bruns (2001) critiques this way of teaching since it limits students’ and teachers’ formative use of literature (p. 84). Instead she advocates an understanding of literature as a “knowledge-in-use”, that literature is something we do. Students are taught to think and analyze literature; in other words, they ´do´ literature. These skills according to Bruns (2001) would be useful for the students when analyzing the language, culture and literature of the world that surrounds them (p. 87).

Langer’s (2005) conclusion sums up that the subject of literature can be a possibility to increase equality where views and opinions are expected to differ. The openness to questioning norms where everyone is a part of a discussion that has no expectations of coming to a consensus enforces the relations between individuals and everyone’s right to their own opinion. Further, Langer (2005) explains that school is a multicultural setting where conflicts will be and have to be confronted, where the goal is not only to broaden what is often called students’ academic skills but also their ability to evolve as human beings accepting social and personal differences. In other words, the school has to represent the same multiculturalism as society at large does. By the use of literature, students can become aware of the group’s and one’s own history and how this affects how one reads. Literature teaches us how to perceive concepts out of different perspectives which can make us re-evaluate our own beliefs and ideas. In conclusion Langer says that literature makes us better thinkers (Langer, 2005, pp. 169-172). Bruns (2001) has searched for any thorough methodological explanations on how to best work
with literature in the classroom but has come up short with only insights into some of the practices of experienced teachers. In order to achieve meaningful education in literature, Bruns (2001) points out that in order to improve and change instruction, teachers’ views and habits need to change as well as the expectations students might have towards the subject (pp. 87; 113).

2.3. Literature in a foreign language/second language

Reading literature in a second language is different from reading literature in your mother tongue. Landmark and Wiklund (2012) have studied how literature is taught in a second language classroom from the perspective of teaching Swedish as a second language. Landmark and Wiklund (2012) ask the relevant questions: why we should teach literature and why it should be done in the classroom? The reason for asking these questions is due to the change in the meaning of what literature wants to convey now, as compared to before the 1960’s where national identity and cultural legacy were the main approaches towards reading Swedish literature. Landmark and Wiklund (2012) point out that in order to teach literature in a second language classroom, teachers need to broaden their purposes and perspectives when teaching literature. This should be accomplished by providing teachers further education in the use of literature in the second language classroom (pp. 15-16). In a similar manner Parkinson and Thomas (2000) have studied the use of literature but in the foreign language classroom in the subject of English. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) argue for similar experiences that teacher’s need to broaden their approaches to literature in the EFL/ESL classroom since there is a distinct difference between what teachers want to make of literature in the classroom, and what is really taking place (pp. 26-27). Furthermore, Landmark and Wiklund (2012) point out the different types of literary theories such as gender theory or postcolonial theory are all changeable which means the point of study is not an ever-fixed mark. However, these theories give students the opportunity to think critically and understand and interpret what is read in a human context (pp. 14-17).

While Landmark and Wiklund (2012) explore theories and the opportunities they may bring to the classroom, Parkinson and Thomas (2000) explore an according to them, openness amongst teachers to disregard the authoritarian guidelines such as the school curriculum and instead focus on their own ideas. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) list a great number of activities which are typically involved in the teaching of literature namely; summaries of content, reading aloud, translation, the incorporation of secondary literature, reading for pleasure, reading for content/cultural aspects, FL practice, linguistic analysis etc. They point out that each approach has its pros and cons but they are all equally represented in the FL classroom (pp. 26-35).

Parkinson and Thomas (2000) suggest that literature and especially poetry and classical works have their own linguistic features. Furthermore, they suggest both short-story reading and novel reading if taught in its cultural context with focus on content and narrative can both achieve the goal of development in reading strategies and skills (pp. 105; 121). Further, Landmark and Wiklund (2012) paraphrase Dostojevskij and lift the notion of characters and what impact they have on people. Following individuals’ lives makes us empathetic and if they fail to do so either the reader or the author has failed to give the characters a proper voice (Landmark & Wiklund, 2012, pp. 14-17). However, this could also be understood in the way Parkinson and Thomas (2000) explain it, that teachers tend to use literature as a means of language acquisition. However, at times the literary language can be too deviant and even unsuitable for learners of a second language with risks of ruining for example grammatical structures or misleading basic understanding (pp. 40-46).

In other words Landmark and Wiklund (2012) want to emphasize the potential of versatile use of literature and the value it could bring to students in form of democratic assumption of
history, society and identity. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) also see the potential of versatile use of literature but they also specify certain literature as directly inappropriate.

3. Theoretical framework

The following subsections will explain the different theoretical frameworks used to analyse the primary sources. The theories which have been chosen are, critical literacy as described by Hilary Janks in section 3.1 and sociocultural theory as described by Roger Säljö in section 3.2.

3.1. Critical literacy

As has been shown in both the Swedish curriculum and CEFR there is an emphasis on cultural and social perspectives and how they shape our students and the world. Langer (2005) and Bruns (2001) also talk about literature as an instrument which is used to shape individuals. Therefore, critical literacy is useful to understand how literature can be used in the classroom to achieve these goals. Hilary Janks (2010) explains literacy and power through two different perspectives, the neo-Marxist theory of power and Foucault’s theory of power. The Marxist theory wants to unveil ideological intentions which underpin different kinds of texts and discourse. These ideologies can be linked to class relations such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality etc (Janks, 2010, p. 35). Janks (2010) explains further that in society there are institutions or “apparatuses” which enforce these ideological ideas and are often seen as something natural or as Janks (2010) calls it “common sense”. The whole idea of critical literacy is therefore to make “common sense” into something unnatural and unfold them as “constructed representations of the social order, serving the interests of some at the expense of others” (p. 36).

According to Thompson’s Modes of Operation of Ideology as explained by Janks (2010), ideology can be distinguished by five modes. Legitimation, or the ways we use language to establish and keep dominant positions, to do this we can use different discursive strategies; rationalization where “chain of reasoning” is that which an argument depends on, universalization is “a set of institutional arrangements which privilege certain groups”, and narrativisation is a way of adapting something unnatural to become natural and seen as “common sense” or a timeless truth (p. 37). Dissimilation means that domination or power is concealed; displacement is often used to bring something into a positive light instead of negative. Unification and fragmentation means that the first mentioned seeks to unify people with a collective identity, while the second seeks to separate them. However, unification also needs the sense of an other in order to have an us. Therefore, unification in a way is also fragmented. Reification is to “turn a process into a thing or an event”. This means that dominant or subordinate positions are established at a certain time and place with certain people (pp. 37-39). These different modes can be used in the classroom to create projects on identity through critical literacy (p. 42).

Foucault, compared to neo-Marxism does not look at the theory of ideology but the theory of power and truth. Foucault does not see power as something negative but as something strong which produces effects which affects our everyday life of how we behave. Because of this Foucault insists that we need to see what effects texts brings into our literacy classroom (pp. 49-51).

“Texts have designs on us. As consumers of textual meanings, we have to be able to see the truths that texts constitute and that constitute them and we have to be able to imagine their effects. Critical reading, in combination with an ethic of social justice, is fundamental in order to protect our own rights and the rights of others” (Janks, 2010, p. 98).
When language is used we make choices of lexical, sequencing and grammatical purposes to say what we want. Our choices depend on what it is we want to convey and what effects we want it to have. In the same way, a text also positions itself just as the writer wants to position the reader in accordance to the writer’s point of view. The choices made by the writer, linguistic or other, works to trigger effects for the reader. Texts allow the reader to see into the writer’s understanding of the world, or their version of reality. This can be said both for non-fiction and fictional texts (Janks, 2010, p. 61). Texts are in other words both positioned and positioning. They are there to persuade us about something and give effects for its readers. These effects can be either good or bad. An example of this is the common discourse of gender binary where men are constructed as active while women are passive. This is something culturally embedded and is taken for granted instead of seen as a version of reality. In an opposing version, we would be given a new set of truths but the binary construct would still be there but with reversed power relations. Pictures can also be used to construct or emphasize meaning since they are also constructs of how reality is perceived. Sometimes visuals can even be contradictory to the meaning of the text (pp. 65-65). Janks (2010) describes discourse as something we inhabit or as a position we have, she says that we all reside comfortably within one discourse and therefore are more comfortable with certain texts. Our ability to read a text critically depends on which discourse we are located in and to which discourse the text belongs to. Furthermore, she explains that texts that offend us let us structure our own values and beliefs. It is easier to be critical against a text that we do not feel comfortable with and this discomfort gives us the critical distance needed to oppose them (pp. 71-72).

Critical literacy was chosen as a theoretical framework due to its effects on ideology, identity and critical thinking. Students would encounter all of these terms in the reading of literature. Critical literacy is also prevalent in the Swedish curriculum about students’ ability to interpret and understand underlying assumptions. Therefore, critical literacy is a great tool for teachers in the language classroom to use when studying literature. As a teacher, critical literacy could be used as a method in the classroom for many different reasons, for instance cases of bullying, racism or to get a silent class to talk. This theory is useful in the analysis of the primary sources to identify what approaches or positions the researchers have adopted when it comes to teaching and learning literature in the EFL/ESL classroom. Critical literacy can help identify how texts chosen or goals ascribed to literature are positioned in order to position the reader, namely the students. It can also highlight what approaches to literature are perceived as more important by teachers and what ideological factors are prevalent.

### 3.2. Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is about how people are shaped by being active participants in activities which are of cultural tendencies. Sociocultural theory in the perspective of teaching or learning is about how individuals make use of culturally embedded tools. It is the interplay between society at large and the individual which is in focus, what a person can do or know, and how that is affected by society but also how it is an effect of society (Säljö, 2010, p. 18). Säljö (2010) explains that the human as a biological creature have not changed much over the decades but our knowledge, physics and even our intellect has changed over time. These changes are dependent on how humans perceive collective cultural knowledge and how they are aquired. Säljö (2010) explains sociocultural theory as exosomatic, something that lies beyond the biological state of the human. It is an outer development where humans acquire cultural resources and knowledge through society (pp. 19-20). To understand the word culture Säljö (2010) chose to explain it as the values we live by, ideas and knowledge that we acquire when interacting with the world. This knowledge can be both physical and non-physical, physical in the means of different kinds of instruments we use when measuring things and non-physical in
the means of our thoughts and language. Humans compared to other animals have the ability to create knowledge by using language. We even have the ability to transform language into an action (pp. 29; 34-35).

According to Säljö (2010), how we see the world, communicate, or even think, is not connected to biological processes but to sociocultural tendencies. How we learn new things stem from the sociocultural sphere of how we learn by communicating culture (pp. 36-37). The notion of learning and development in sociocultural theory is then based on communicative processes where individuals through communication become a part of a new set of skills.

Since communication is of such importance in sociocultural theory it also looks at something called sociogenetics. Sociogenetics is about understanding how knowledge represents itself and how it is passed on. Questions commonly asked to research this are: What social or physical activities have caused these communicative patterns? How have these communicative patterns embedded itself into society? Whom does it affect? etc. By asking these question Säljö (2010) points out it is possible to look at learning and learning difficulties in communicative patterns (pp. 37-38). Language and communication are the links between teacher and student. The teacher mediates knowledge that society has already interpreted (pp. 66-67). Texts which are read or written are sociocultural activities which all try to convey different types of values and ideas. To be able to understand or mediate such values and ideas, it requires a set of cultural practices and communicative rules as to how it is supposed to be interpreted.

An important notion here is that a text is never isolated but is always within the context of communication (p. 186). Texts represents an opportunity to work democratically where students and teachers can become a part of viewing the world through new glasses. Texts allows us to be critical to that which is mediated towards society, something which would be difficult without the written language (pp. 188; 192).

Sociocultural theory was chosen as a theoretical framework due to its relevance in the Swedish curriculum where schools seek to foster democratic citizens but mostly because of the theory of how individuals learn. The curriculum also speaks of the multicultural society that we live in and that this sets demands on schools to help students understand different cultures (Skolverket, 2011, p. 5). Sociocultural theory is the predominant paradigm in Swedish education approaches. An example of this is the emphasis on communicative language skills in the English subject. However, in the present thesis, the theoretical approach also help identify assumptions about learning that underlie studies about the role of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom.

4. Method and material

This section presents the design of the study as well as how the material has been chosen through searches via databases. It also accounts for ethical considerations involved in the literature review.

4.1. Design

This study is a systematic literature review of previous research. A systematic literature review is a qualitative study where previous research is analyzed and critically evaluated. An important dimension of a literature review is that the material chosen is focused on current research within a specific subject (Barajas et.al, 2013, p. 31).
The following will show how the search for previous research was conducted. As mentioned in the introduction the search was not narrowed down to a single method of teaching literature. Such a narrow search would have generated too little research to base the analysis on and it would have made the analysis unidirectional. Therefore, the search was a broader search for the teaching of literature in the second language classroom.

A number of different keywords were attempted together with a librarian at Dalarna University in order to find the kind of studies which would help answer the questions posed in this thesis: second language, English literature, high school, teacher, secondary education, fiction, etc. There were difficulties finding enough previous research for this study especially studies performed in a Swedish context. Numerous hits which appeared during the search were studies conducted in a Swedish context but had been conducted in middle schools or universities and were therefore not suitable for this thesis. The studies found are quantitative, qualitative, and evaluative studies. This brings a multitude of aspects for my own analysis. The search was conducted through the database ERIC (EBSCO) using the thesaurus to find appropriate keywords. In the end the search generated five hits in total that matched my framework of upper secondary school, second language, literature and teaching methods.

4.1.1. Exposition of primary sources
In the table below you will find the selected primary sources for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country(ies)</th>
<th>Type of study</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Bloemert, J., Jansen, E &amp; van de Grift, W.</td>
<td>Exploring EFL Literature Approaches in Dutch Secondary Education</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Öz, H. &amp; Efecioglu, E.</td>
<td>Graphic Novels: An Alternative Approach to Teach English as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab Rashid, R., Edwin Vethamani, M &amp; Basree Abdul Rahman, S.</td>
<td>Approaches Employed by Teachers in Teaching Literature to Less Proficient Students in Form 1 and Form 2</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Kelanta, Malaysia</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papadima-Sophocleous, S.</td>
<td>Can Teenagers Be Motivated to Read Literature</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Cyprus, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Italy</td>
<td>Evaluative article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, B., Haberling, J.</td>
<td>The Case of Studying</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>USA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2. Ethical aspects

Ethical aspects are of importance. According to Barajas et.al aspects to consider are: that all data is accounted for and that the result is presented unbiased the researchers view (Barajas et.al 2013, pp. 69-70). The selection and presentation of the material should be done with these ethical aspects in mind. Therefore, all research chosen for this thesis has been peer-reviewed. All data was categorized according to their main concepts, strengths, and weaknesses. This was done to make an analysis of the studies easier to comprehend and to be sure that all data has been accounted for.

5. Result

In this section, the results of the review of the studies will be presented, after which a categorization will be done according to which of the research questions either of the sources can answer.

Bloemert et al. (2016) examine what goals teachers themselves ascribe to the teaching of literature in a second language perspective at pre-university level in the Netherlands. Pre-university level in the Netherlands correspond to students between the age of 15 to 18. Bloemert et al. used four approaches to literature to measure the use of each approach. These focused respectively on the: text, the context, the reader, and language development. Each focus comprised a total of 20 elements of use, as follows. The text approach included storyline, character development, who, what and where, recognizing text types, distinguishing text types and literary terminology. The context approach included historical aspects of a literary work, social and societal aspects of a literary work, cultural aspects of a literary work, overview of literary history, literary periods, information about the author and biographical aspects of a literary work. The reader approach included student’s personal reaction, critical thinking, reading pleasure and critical report of reading experience. The language approach included, making reading miles to improve language skills, English vocabulary in a literary text and English linguistic aspects in a literary text. “Making reading miles” is directly translated from Dutch to English by the researchers themselves, meaning that students should read many texts to improve their language skills (p. 179). They received a total of 134 responses to their questionnaire. They found that in the Netherlands literature has an insecure place in the curriculum and that this leads to considerable variation in terms of how literature is taught (p. 184). Bloemert et al. point out that even though the use of literature in the EFL classroom has increased over the past years there has been no theorization on how to best use literature (p. 106). Their study shows that depending on the amount of lesson time given, the approaches and goals to teaching literature vary. When given plenty of lesson time the approaches of context, in other words; historical, cultural and social aspects of a literary work is given more attention as well as the text approach which is the storyline, character development, who, what and where, recognising and distinguishing text types and literary terminology. However, the study also shows that each of the four approaches are used on a regular basis, but there is a wide range between always and never adapting certain approaches as the goal for the teaching of literature (pp. 179;180;182). Bloemert et al. also conclude that the goals applied the teaching of literature are rather due to the curriculum than teacher demographics which implies that how we interpret the curriculum is more important than age, level of education or experience (p. 184). The reliability of their research has proven to range from acceptable to relatively high according to
the researchers and the Cronbach Alpha scale which was used. The article was chosen because it tries to implement a way to measure what choices teachers make in regards of the four approaches and what variables (age, level of education and years of experience) that can be related to these choices. However, the authors also point out that further research and testing of the validity of the four approaches is needed due to this being the first study where the four approaches have been broken down into 20 elements. According to the authors it is therefore difficult to draw any generalizable conclusions (p. 184).

Öz and Efecioglu (2015) researched whether graphic novels can help students understand literary texts in a foreign language easier and improve their language learning (p. 80). The study was conducted on 56 10th grade students in a school in Ankara, Turkey. The reason for choosing this article was that the use of graphic novels is in my experience not very common in a classroom context; therefore, I found it interesting to see what could be learned from a concept such as this. Öz and Efecioglu (2015) lift Krashen’s hypothesis about first language in second language education and that pictures can, in the same way as a first language help students comprehend what they are reading, thus making graphic novels a supporting attribute in the L2 classroom (p. 77). Öz and Efecioglu found that even though students enjoy graphic novels it is something they are not used to. In this study, the students were to read Macbeth as a graphic novel. The group of students that took part in the study showed higher understanding of vocabulary, critical thinking, setting, foreshadowing, symbols and inference. The main goal of teaching graphic novels was in other words to see whether it was an effective way to teach English as a foreign language and if it could help students better their reading abilities and understanding (p. 85). The research had limitations since groups were not divided between whether they had language difficulties or not. Such a categorization could have enhanced the results of the study. Furthermore, Öz and Efecioglu point out that a weakness of their study was that such a sectioning could have given a stronger connection and provided better insights into the effects the goal of the method would have had on the students. On the other hand, the research has its benefit in lifting the use of graphic novels as an instrument in the second language classroom to improve both understanding and reading ability instead of only using ordinary novels (p. 87).

Rashid et al. (2010) research how teachers teach literature to students who are less proficient in English as a second language in Malaysia (pp. 87-88). This study which was conducted in 18 rural secondary schools in Kelanta, is interesting as it addresses both positive and negative effects of teachers views of teaching literature to less proficient students and how they implement it in the classroom. The main findings were that teachers tended to code-switch and often translated what they said, this according to the teachers to deepen the understanding. However, Rashid et al. also found that of the 10 teachers who participated in the study, 62% had a negative attitude towards teaching less proficient students in literature and only 38% had positive views (p. 92). The teachers with a positive view saw the potential of literature to help students develop the English language. The teachers who were negative towards the teaching of literature to less proficient students had as main reason that the student’s proficiency level affected the teaching and learning process. The way in which it affected seems to be students’ inability to comprehend the language of texts. They also point out that a common lesson was teacher centered where teachers spoon fed students. The most common approach to literature was information-based learning where the subject matter of the text was the most important. With the teachers spoon feeding the student Rashid et al. point out that the goal of the lesson will never be achieved. Students were also disappointed in the usage of the mother tongue in the classroom. Students preferred practical ways of learning literature, for instance through drama, this was however not a recurrent occurrence in the classroom (pp. 92-95). A strength of this research is in my opinion that it highlights how teachers view on the teaching of literature affects how it is taught. Another of the strengths I found was that the study was conducted on a
total of 18 schools which gives a vast amount of data to analyze. According to Rashid et al. it also shows how teachers’ use of the mother tongue affects both students’ view on literature and the language classroom as a whole. The main weakness of the study, I found was that the literature component in Malaysia was rather new and therefore further research will be needed in order to understand how teachers are instructed to teach literature in the future (p. 87; 95).

Papadima-Sophocleous (2009) examined how the implementation of four teaching methods which had been applied to schools five schools one in each country; Cyprus, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Italy as an experiment to try and motivate students to read literature had succeeded or not (p. 121). This article compared to the above mentioned is that this is out of a student perspective and the others from a teacher perspective. I do however find the article viable for my own study since it pin-points certain pedagogical perspectives and methods and the learning outcomes of them. The study was brought on due to recent reports in the NEA (National Endowment for the ARTS) in the US, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) in England and results from OECD’s Pisa surveys which showed that reading had declined at a rapid rate in many parts of the world at the same time as reading skills such as being able to critically judge the content of different types of texts also had declined (p.119). Different methods were implemented, tested and evaluated both by teachers and students through reading logs and journals. Two methods were implemented simultaneously and described as one method, method 1 & 2 and method 3 & 4. Method 1 & 2 was about reflective thinking in both discussions and writing and how a text is composed. This method gave the result of students becoming more confident when reading literature and more active in both reading and participating in discussions (p. 122;125). Method 3 & 4 was about dramatization and reading logs. This method resulted in increased skills of critical thinking and reflective thinking (p. 127-128). These new types of methods which according to the researchers were less common when teaching literature did motivate students but it also encouraged teachers to find new ways to teach literature (p. 130). The obvious strengths of this study is in my opinion that it clearly shows that new methods in teaching literature needs to be tested and evaluated both in order to motivate students but also teachers to find new ways in which literature can be taught (p. 126). A clear drawback of this evaluative article I found to be is that it does not show teachers’ motivation or ability to teach literature. Since the study is performed in several countries one can draw the conclusion that both the practices and teacher education are not the same in every country. Therefore, it is difficult to say that every teacher in this study used the methods in the same way and therefore the outcome of the study can be misleading.

White & Haberling (2006) conducted an experiment of case studies in a 10th grade class in Hudsonville who was experiencing issues of bullying and violence. The aim of this study was to try using case studies to improve students’ moral choices and empathy (p. 1;6;9). The students performed pre-reading activities of case studies about different kinds of discrimination, this encouraged students to think critically and prepare them for the dilemmas they would face in the novel they were going to read (p. 10). White & Haberling found that students’ ability to reflect and be critical towards themselves, society and others went far beyond the context of the case studies. Students also drew parallels to their own life, learned to listen to other’s opinions and that sometimes one has to agree to disagree. What this helped them realize, according to W & H, is that sometimes there is no right or wrong answer (p. 11-12). Neither of the authors discuss limitations of the study, however as a source for this thesis it is limited in the way that it is performed in an L1 context, although, with some students being exchange students and therefore to some extent L2. The strength of this study is that it shows that teachers choices in method can be a vital source of motivation for a quiet class or a class struggling with bullying and violence. The method opened up to a more accepting atmosphere in the classroom and students learned to listen and accept other people’s opinions since there was no correct or incorrect answer (p. 14-15). The biggest weakness of this study was the core structure, no clear
methodology section that explains how the study was conducted or how data was gathered, neither does it explain ethical aspects of the research.

5.1. Content analysis

This subsection will analyze the sources according to the research questions.

5.1.1. What goals are ascribed to the teaching of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom?

Papadima-Sophocleous (2009), White & Haberling (2006) and Öz and Efecioglu (2015) studies each have a clear goal as to why certain methods have been applied in the research. In other words, the why? question in each of these articles is central. In Bloemert et al. (2016) and Rashid et al. (2010) there is not much of a why? question but more about how teachers teach and what choices they make when they are trying to achieve a goal. In the table below is a simplification of each article and the goals ascribed to each of the experiments.

Table 2. Goals ascribed to the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Student-oriented goals</th>
<th>Teacher-oriented goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can Teenagers Be Motivated to Read Literature (2009)</td>
<td>Trying out different methods in order to motivate students to read more. Improve critical thinking and reading skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papadima-Sophocleous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Case of Studying Character(s) in the Literature Classroom (2006)</td>
<td>Using case studies to build student’s empathetic and democratic skills. Primary goal is to change students’ behaviour to help prevent cases of bullying and antisocial behaviour. Improve critical thinking skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White and Haberling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Öz and Efecioglu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring EFL Literature Approaches in Dutch Secondary Education (2016)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers own opinion of what is important and/or what choices they make in the literature classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloemert et.al</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashid et al.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All of the three articles with student-oriented goal have in common that they one way or another wants to improve students’ abilities to think critically or their ability to analyse the content of a text. White & Haberling (2006) is the one which stands out because it does not only want to
change thinking but also change students’ behavior, this was also the only of the three student-oriented goal articles which did not address student’s reading skills. White and Haberling (2006) together with Öz and Efecioglu (2015) specify a certain type of literature in order to achieve the goals ascribed to their studies. The three other studies does not advocate for a certain type of literature but only that literature should be read in order to develop different types of language skills, such as: critical thinking and deeper understand of literary texts. Bloemert et al. (2016) is the one study which brings forth a wider scope of understanding how teachers choose to work with literature, rather than focusing on a certain set of abilities or goals.

5.1.2. What activities are linked to the teaching of English literature in the ESL/EFL classroom?

All of the above described research articles have activities linked to the teaching of literature, some more than others. These activities can be seen as methods to answer the didactic question what, how and why. As can be seen in the table above, two of the articles show no specific method behind the activities when teaching literature, but rather an approach to which content should be prevalent. In other words, the articles show what type of approaches which are used in the teaching of literature, but not how it is used. The three sources which also had a specific goal with the teaching of literature also show that a specific method has been used when it comes to the activities taking place in the classroom when reading literature. Papadima-Sophocleous (2009) used four different methods as described in the result section with goals to motivate students to read literature. They did this by using different ways for students to show what they have learned; reading logs, reflective thinking, discussions and dramatization. White and Haberling (2006) used case studies as a method to increase critical thinking and try to help prevent bullying and antisocial behavior. By reading cases where other people were discriminated they hoped to awaken the students’ empathy and critical thinking skills. Öz and Efecioglu (2015) implemented the reading of graphic novels as a method to improve and motivate language abilities and critical thinking. They hoped that the use of images would help student’s comprehension of reading literature in a second language. The methods used in either study is very different from the other. The difference between the article shows that there is great variation to which method is chosen and what purpose it has. Depending on the why question to the teaching of literature, the answer to the how is different. The two sources that does not provide a specific method or activity however, are more interested in the choices teachers make on the basis of their school curriculum.

The result from the analysis show that studies conducted using a certain method tend to be more focused on student-oriented goals, while studies conducted on the basis of teachers’ approaches to literature in the classroom focused on teacher-oriented goals of teaching. The outcome of the result is simply because the studies have been conducted in different ways and with different aims. Yet it was this variety of research which was the main point of this literature review to generate a multiplicity of the use of literature in the second language classroom.

6. Discussion

What became most prominent in this literature review according to myself was that literature truly has an insecure place in the language classroom due to the variety of views, opinions, approaches, goals, and methods towards working with literature in the EFL/ESL classroom in upper secondary school. The articles also showed that the mere experience of reading is of less value, as are the aesthetic dimensions of reading literature, focus is mainly on that which in some way can affect or be affected.
The results indicate that studies performed in the manners of Bloemert et al. (2016) and Rashid et al. (2010) does not focus on a single theory or method of teaching but on approaches mainly considered from the countries’ school curriculum. Landmark and Wiklund (2012) also lift that theory, even though helpful in the education of literature, it is of minor importance to emphasize them, but instead focus on the potential of using literature in the classroom for a variety of reasons and not just according to one theoretical approach. For Bloemert et al. (2016) the approaches examined were also broken down into elements using the CEFR. In this study, they focused on several aspects to the teaching of literature, however there were no goals ascribed to, or activities linked to the literature classroom. Bloemert et al. (2016) came to the conclusion that the subject of literature has an insecure place in the second language classroom and that further research is needed to see how teacher teach literature. This is an interesting finding since the same could be concluded for how we see literature in the Swedish context. The Swedish curriculum which is derived from CEFR just as the Dutch curriculum, shows that literature should indeed be used in the second language classroom, but there is an insecurity as to how and why it should be used. What Bloemert et al. (2016) show is that there is more focus given to theories of cultural context as of the type Säljö (2010) describes but less focus is given to critical literacy. Landmark and Wiklund (2012) point out that teachers need further education in how to use literature in the second language classroom to make the insecurity which has been described in the article and in the Swedish curriculum may be helped. Rashid et al. (2010) study showed that teachers tended to spoon feed students and using the L1 in order to deepen the understanding. Just as Bruns (2011) criticize information-based learning and the teacher centered classroom so does Rashid et.al. (2010) Bruns (2011) says that literature is knowledge-in-use and something that students need to do. The traditional ways of teaching have also been criticized in Sweden (e.g. Landmark & Wiklund 2012; Lundahl 2012), and as the studies mentioned in this thesis show, many researchers call for more innovative uses of literature in the classroom. The articles advocate that students should learn to understand a text on several levels and not only understanding the words on paper. The study shows that information-based learning with teacher centered lessons did not achieve the goals the teachers had set out. Langer (2005) lifts that there is a fear among some teachers to give students a voice in the classroom and that this is a step away from student-oriented goals, which is in direct conflict with the pedagogical goals of getting students to think for themselves. Therefore, it is important to try to take some distance from the traditional ways of teaching and instead allowing students to have more space in the language classroom. Neither Janks (2010) nor Säljö’s (2010) theories on critical literacy or cultural theory are in any way prominent in this study. Therefore, as the result section of this thesis shows that where there is a lack of theories used by teachers, students become invisible in the classroom.

The result of the analysis of White’s and Haberling’s (2006) study shows that this was the study where both method and theory was most prominent. Their aim was to change students’ behavior and foster more empathetic and democratic citizens. This is something which is very much prominent in the Swedish curriculum, that school should strive to foster democratic citizens (Skolverket 2011a, p. 1). White and Haberling’s study and the use of case studies is similar to what Janks (2010) described as a project on identity through critical literacy, to unscramble and reconstruct the dominant and subordinate structures in the classroom. Bruns (2011) also emphasizes that literature can help individuals find a way to explain feelings, behavior and thoughts and find new ways or values to look onto the world with. There was also a use of sociocultural theory where culture is discussed through the case studies in means of values, ideas, and knowledge. The students interacted and found new ways of viewing the world just as Langer (2005), Landmark and Wiklund (2012), and Bruns (2011) has also emphasized. Öz andEfecioğlu (2015), and Papadima-Sophocleous (2009) studies are on one hand very different when it comes to method and activities in the classroom, but they share similar goals.
Both studies tend to work on the theory of critical literacy where the studies seek to improve students’ analytical skills. Critical literacy as explained by Janks (2010) also points out the usability of pictures when analyzing texts since they can just as well emphasize as contradict the content of the text. In regards of a picture contradicting a text Öz and Efecioglu (2015) study could be questioned whether graphic novels really are a good way to better reading skills, but it can with some certainty be an instrument for critical thinking. As Parkinson and Thomas (2000) points out some literature can have a too deviant language for students to comprehend and should be avoided. It can be questioned if using graphic novels when reading older and more difficult texts such as Macbeth is good or should at all be included. Graphic novels are not spoken out as a part of the Swedish curriculum but could rather be a part of the mixture of fiction. I do believe that graphic novels are a rare complement in Swedish language classrooms, however it could be considered as a useful supplement for students who are less proficient readers.

6.1. Suggestions for future research

When starting the search for primary sources on the subject of teaching literature in EFL and ESL it became evident that it was difficult to find research which had been conducted during recent years in the Swedish context. This became evident in the data chosen for this thesis where only one of the articles involved Swedish schools and teachers. Therefore, further research in the use of literature in a Swedish context would be of advantage to see what activities and goals Swedish teachers ascribe to the teaching of literary texts in a second language. Furthermore, research that replicates and validates some of the methods and approaches mentioned in the data would be beneficial to help strengthen the claims made by these researchers. Further empirical studies could help validate previous research, but also contribute with a Swedish view which can then be compared to other European countries who follow the guidelines of CEFR.

7. Conclusion

The aim for this study was to research how literature is used in EFL/ESL classrooms for upper secondary school. The study aimed to show the use of literature and the choices made by teachers and what effects different methods had on what was learnt. For the thesis, the following questions were asked:

- What goals are ascribed to the teaching of English literature in the ESL/EFL classroom?
- What activities are linked to the teaching of English literature in the ESL/EFL classroom?

The conclusion of this thesis is that there are a variety of goals ascribed to the teaching of literature. The most prominent goals tend to be critical thinking skills, reading skills, and fostering democratic and empathetic citizens, in other words, teachers adopted either both sociocultural theory and critical theory in their activities in the classroom or one was more prominent than the other. It could be generalized that most teachers do have a certain goal of their teaching, however, it was not always prevalent in the research. The activities that were linked to the teaching of literature were commonly linked to the goal. Different activities were used for different purposes, if the purpose was changing behavior, improving critical thinking, or improving reading skills, different activities were tested and different theoretical approaches were used.
Since the research about how literature is used in the English classroom in Sweden is inconclusive it is difficult to answer the research questions out of that context. However, this thesis gives an overview of the variety of goals and activities linked to the teaching of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom and should hopefully bring some new light onto the topic. Clearly, new research is needed to provide a better picture for the Swedish context.
8. References

Primary Sources


Secondary sources


