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A literature study on the use of authentic texts in the EFL upper elementary classroom

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Abstract:
The English language is widely used throughout the world and has become a core subject in many countries, especially for students in the upper elementary classroom. While textbooks have been the preferred EFL teaching method for a long time, this belief has seemingly changed within the last few years. Therefore, this study looks at what prior research says about the use of authentic texts in the EFL upper elementary classroom with an aim to answer research questions on how teachers can work with authentic texts, what the potential benefits of using authentic texts are and what teachers and students say about the use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom. While this thesis is written from a Swedish perspective, it is recognized that many countries teach EFL. Therefore, international results have also been taken into consideration and seven previous research studies have been analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of the use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom. Results indicate that the use of authentic texts is beneficial in teaching EFL. However, many teachers are still reluctant to use these, mainly because of time constraints and the belief that such texts are too difficult for their students. Since these findings are mainly focused on areas outside of Sweden, additional research is needed before conclusions can be drawn on the use of authentic texts in the Swedish upper elementary EFL classroom.

Keywords: authentic texts, simplified texts, English as a foreign language, English language learners, upper elementary education
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1. Introduction

Teachers teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) should take into account the status of the English language in the country where it is being taught (Pinter, 2006, p. 36). In Sweden, English and all of its variations can be seen and heard virtually anywhere, at any given time of day. This means that students are not solely limited to learning English in the classroom. Many television programs are in English, every bookstore has an English section and it is more times than not the preferred language of business. As Yoxsimer Paulsrud (2014) highlights, “English is a common and often necessary part of everyday life in Sweden…where/…Swedes use English not only as a social language peppered with catchy phrases and quotes from films…, but also in academic texts…” (p. 17). Furthermore, she points out that since the majority of Swedish students will need English both in their future education and in their professional lives, it is important that English be taught from a young school age (Yoxsimer Paulsrud, 2014, p. 22).

Panagiotiduo (2015) writes that another important aspect that teachers of young children should remember when teaching EFL is that these students are eager to learn. They are unafraid to test the language and the author encourages teachers to take advantage of this eagerness (p. 34). Motivation plays consequently a large part when learning a new language and as Pinter (2006) explains it, younger children are usually intrinsically motivated, meaning that they want to learn English simply because it is fun. Around the age of eleven or twelve, however, many students begin to see English as important for their future goals. Pinter calls this extrinsic motivation and stresses that teachers in the upper elementary grades have a responsibility to provide activities that continue to motivate older language learners (p. 37). Authentic texts in the form of story books, magazines and even the Internet can therefore be of help in the English classroom (Pinter, 2006, p. 120).

It is this author’s experience, however, that many students still seem to learn English based on weekly vocabulary lists, reading comprehension in the form of short texts and fill-in-the-blank exercises in a workbook, plus a Friday test. This is based on several years of working at a secondary school for students with special needs, as well as in a number of student teaching opportunities during the last three years in an upper elementary classroom. Authentic texts are nowhere to be found in either of these two schools, not even in the school libraries. Furthermore, in conversation with teachers at both of these schools, it was learned that such texts are, to a great extent, considered too difficult for students in upper elementary school. Despite the fact that most students seem willing and eager to read and speak “real” English, they are only given opportunities to do this on their own time, for example during breaks or at home. While the two schools referenced above do not represent the entire country of Sweden and its accepted teaching practices as a whole, these experiences have nevertheless raised an interesting point. Is this a worldwide practice when teaching EFL? What does prior research say about the use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom?

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to examine what prior research says about the use of authentic texts in the EFL upper elementary classroom. The research questions that this study therefore aspires to answer are as follows:

1. How can teachers work with authentic texts?
2. What are the potential benefits of using authentic texts?
3. What are teachers’ and students’ attitudes and/or beliefs about the use of authentic texts?
While this study aims to first and foremost answer these questions with the Swedish EFL classroom in mind, it is recognized that Sweden is not the only country teaching EFL. Therefore, international results are also considered relevant for this study.

2. Background

This section looks closer into the English Syllabus for the upper elementary classroom in the Swedish school system. Additionally, the terms used in this work are explained in order to facilitate reading understanding. Information is then given on the ongoing debate in the language classroom over the use of authentic texts versus textbook teaching. The final part of this section discusses theories on foreign language learning and the associated social aspects, as well as theories on motivation.

2.1. Why and how is English taught?

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), henceforth referred to as The Agency for Education, writes that the “knowledge of English … increases the individual’s opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in international studies and working life” (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32). In other words, English is one of the Swedish educational system’s core subjects and is seen as a door to the world where future education and career opportunities await. Communication is thus key and according to the long-term goals in the English Syllabus, Swedish students should develop an ability to do the following throughout the course of their education:

- Understand and interpret both spoken and written English
- Use the language to effectively communicate in both speech and writing
- Use different strategies to understand others and to make themselves understood when speaking or writing English
- Adapt their use of the language dependent upon the context and recipient

(Skolverket, 2011, p. 32)

In order to reach these goals, The Agency for Education (2007) is clear on the necessity for teachers to provide students with a variety of activities geared towards increasing communicative skills. These can include reading books silently and/or aloud, writing exercises, role-playing and project work where students stronger in the English language can support their weaker counterparts (pp. 58-59). Is it therefore interesting to note that many teachers restrict themselves to textbook teaching, despite the fact that they are seemingly free to choose from a wide variety of methods aimed at helping their students reach the goals as spelled out in the English syllabus.

A 2006 study conducted by The Agency for Education comparing the common teaching methods used in the subjects of Art, English and Political Science concludes that textbook teaching is most common in the English classroom. What is more, many teachers interviewed in this same study agree with this assessment and explain that textbooks usually closely follow the English Syllabus, thus ensuring that a large majority of students reach the goals laid out by the Agency for Education (2006, p. 11). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) stresses, however, that many Swedish students are bored and under-stimulated by the teachers’ choice to solely teach English out of a textbook and argues that students are seldom challenged in the English classroom, since all students are given the same tasks. The students who quickly finish these tasks are given new tasks, often from the same textbook (2011, p. 2). Because of this, it can be assumed that motivation to continue learning English in the classroom becomes a factor. Therefore, more and more students are turning to sources outside of the classroom to further develop their English language skills and, as Sundqvist & Sylvén (2012) explain, this often...
necessitates students choosing their own texts to read in the form of blogs, newspaper articles and various works of fiction (pp. 186-187).

2.2. Definition of terms
The following terms are used throughout the thesis and are therefore clarified to facilitate reader understanding.

2.2.1.1 Authentic texts
Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy and McNamara (2007) define authentic texts as texts written for purposes other than language learning. These texts usually serve a social purpose and can encompass anything from newspaper articles and timetables to recipes, travel brochures and literature (p. 17).

2.2.2.2 Simplified texts
A simplified text is a text that has been adapted or written with specific grammar and linguistics forms in mind and is thought to aid foreign language learners (Crossley, Allen & McNamara, 2012, pp. 89-91). For the purpose of this study, simplified texts refer to the texts typically found in language textbooks.

2.2.3.3 English as a foreign language (EFL)
Pinter (2006) writes that EFL is a term generally used when students have little access to English outside of the classroom (p. 166). While this is not the case in Sweden, this study takes international research into account. Therefore, this term seems more appropriate to use than other terms associated with learning English as a foreign language. Additionally, this term is thought to best describe those students currently studying English in the Swedish school system, many of whom are learning English as a third or fourth language.

2.3. Is authentic better?
Crossley et al., active researchers in the area of Applied Linguistics, state that a preferred method when teaching a foreign language is the use of authentic texts (2007, pp. 15-17). They highlight that authentic texts are especially important in light of a recent trend towards communicative pedagogy, something that has increased the need for student exposure to authentic language examples. Understanding these is a key factor in communicative pedagogy and cohesion is the term often used to describe how understandable a text is. The authors highlight that authentic texts are thought by many to have more cohesion than simplified texts, thus making them easier to understand. Therefore, modifications to authentic texts aimed at making them simpler can actually do the opposite due to a lack of cohesiveness (Crossley et al., 2007, p. 17).

Furthermore, Pinter (2006) underlines that children do not need to understand everything in order to enjoy and learn from an authentic text (p. 124). As she states, “authentic texts can be a great source of interest and motivation for young learners, but it is important that challenge and support are balanced” (Pinter, 2006, p. 124). In the end, the choice to use authentic texts in EFL comes down to the teacher. The Core Content in the English Syllabus is clear in that English teaching should consist of texts from different sources, expose students to different types of conversations, give them knowledge of grammatical structures and spelling plus even teach them strategies to understand written and spoken English (Skolverket, 2011, p. 33). Authentic texts facilitate teaching in all of these areas.

2.4. Simplified is simpler
Pinter (2006) writes that most language textbooks are written with several features in mind, for example culture, phonology and learning skills. Additionally, they usually focus on one main
topic, so called holitistic learning, where each chapter is written with an aim to strengthen students’ skills in one specific area of the target language (pp. 115-118). Because of this, Pinter (2006) asserts that textbooks, at least in part, continue to have a place in the language classroom, especially considering the fact that many younger children have not yet developed the language skills necessary to read and understand authentic texts (p. 120). With this same reasoning in mind, Crossley et al. (2007) explain that there are many supporters of simplified texts and shed light on the fact that writers of simplified texts usually omit words and shorten sentences in an effort to take away what is considered unnecessary clutter. However, this can sometimes result in making these texts more difficult to understand, especially for young language learners (Crossley et al., 2007, pp. 16-18).

2.5. The school debate

According to British university professors Badger and MacDonald (2010), authenticity in language teaching has been around for quite awhile, although the ongoing debate between authentic versus simplified texts in the classroom is relatively recent. One opinion that has come to light is that teachers are basically powerless in an authentic language learning classroom, simply because of an underlying message that what happens outside of the classroom is superior to what happens inside (p. 578). While the authors downplay the severity of this threat and stress that authenticity does not keep a teacher from making a pedagogic decision, they do state that there are problems with the term authenticity and its meaning in the classroom. One problem they mention is the inherent ambiguity of the term authenticity. Does a speaker or writer need English as a mother tongue in order for their material to be authentic (Badger & MacDonald, 2010, pp. 579)?

A 2007 empirical study conducted by Crossley et al. to pinpoint the main differences between authentic and simplified texts can perhaps help answer this question. Nine EFL textbooks (two with authentic texts and seven with simplified texts) were compared for their cohesion and readability whereby factors such as cause and effect, sentence structure and word frequency were tested. Conclusions indicate that authentic texts are better at showing cause and effect and use more sentence connectors than their counterparts (Crossley et al., 2007, pp. 25-26). Additionally, their findings indicate that authentic texts use a more diversified, complex language while simplified texts depend on redundancy for comprehension, a language learning method that is thought to help readers feel a connection to a text. It should be noted, however, that simplified texts use more nouns and describing adjectives than authentic texts, and as Crossley et al. point out, this can steer simplified texts away from natural language patterns (2007, pp. 25-26). Also, even if authentic texts use a greater number of confusing and/or unfamiliar words, simplified texts use a more cumbersome syntactic structure which is thought to hinder rather than help reading comprehension (Crossley et al., 2007, pp. 26-27).

Finally, Tyberg (2010) expresses regret that English language learning has become divided between school English and real English, especially from the standpoint that so many people in Sweden today use English as their main source of communication, even if it is not their mother tongue. Therefore, the authors encourage teachers to take advantage of the vast amount of English material there is to be found in Sweden and use it as a complement to textbook teaching (2010, pp. 54-58), an opinion also shared by Pinter (2006, p. 119). As Badger and MacDonald (2010) point out, teachers have not become powerless in the wake of authentic texts, but they do need to find different ways to incorporate the English used outside of the classroom into language teaching (p. 579).
2.6. Theoretical background
The Sociocultural Theory is derived from Vygotsky’s ideas that humans mediate or change the world and the way they live in it through their mental actions. This holds especially true for languages, since these continuously evolve based on the communication needs of the time (Lantolf, 2000, pp. 1-2). Activity theory is a term that encompasses all of Vygotsky’s ideas on human development and behavior and is directly related to motive, whereby different motives give rise to different activities. From this, it can be assumed that students play a large part in forming the goals set forth for them by teachers, this in light of the fact that it is only the students themselves that can decide whether or not to engage in an activity (Lantolf, 2000, pp. 8-13). It is here that Vygotsky’s theory on culturally motivated activities and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) comes into play. ZPD is defined as “…the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else…” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). Imitation is thus key and enables the imitator to become a communicative being (Lantolf, pp. 17-18).

As stated above, motivation is an important part of Vygotsky’s activity theory in relation to language learning. To aid in understanding motivation, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) zoom further in on the motivational factors thought necessary to learn a foreign language, an aspect which they state has become increasingly important due to the worldwide spread of English during the last half century (p. 1). For a long time, the term integrative orientation was used to indicate an increased interest in a specific culture or group of people, which in its turn led to an increased motivation to learn a second language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 2). However, the authors point out that this theory can be questioned in today’s globalised world, especially since some form of the English language is spoken worldwide and is increasingly considered a core subject that should be taught alongside math and language arts. There is no one specific group of people or culture that speaks English (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, Dörnyei and Ushioda underline the need for a new way to measure motivation in language learning, namely the theory of possible selves, where underlying motives in language learning focus on what the learner might become, would like to become or is afraid to become (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, pp. 2-3). This theory is formally referred to as the L2 Motivational Self System where proficiency in a target language is seen as the way to one’s ideal self and is thus a key motivator when learning another language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, pp. 3-4).

3. Methodology
This section describes in detail the method chosen for data collection in this study, as well the strategies and selection criteria used for determining its relevancy. Additionally, the analytical method for collected data is discussed, followed by the ethical aspects that must be taken into consideration when conducting research in any given area.

3.1. Design
The chosen method for this study is a systematic literature review, described by Eriksson Bajaras, Forsberg and Wengström (2013) as a research method used to search for and evaluate literature relevant to a certain subject. An important first step these researchers name is to have a clear aim and research questions in mind when searching for literature. There is no limit to the number of texts that can be used, but, the authors do point out that due to a variety of factors, it is usually necessary to choose the research that best fits the aim of the chosen study. Therefore, it is important to be able to critically evaluate and assess the quality and relevance of the chosen data in order to get a true picture of the area being studied (Eriksson Bajaras et al., 2013, pp. 31-32).
3.2. Selection criteria/strategies
During an introductory seminar, several search motors were introduced by a librarian at Dalarna University, all of which university students have free access to. Because the librarian had received information in advance on the different areas of interest for upcoming thesis projects, several databases were deemed relevant for a systematic literature study within the confines of English didactics. The two that have been most useful for this study are ERIC (The Education Resources Information Center), which is the world’s largest database for literature within the educational field, and LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts), a database of literature written in the areas of language and linguistics. It should be noted, however, that Google Scholar and Summon were used as additional resources to gain access to articles that were not accessible through the university.

The basic search words and possible variations thereof based on the aim and research questions of the study used in the databases were as follows:

- Authentic texts (authentic materials, authenticity, autentiska texter)
- English as a foreign language (English language learning, English as a foreign language, EFL, English as a second language, ESL, engelska som främmande språk)
- Teaching methods (undervisningsmetoder)
- Teacher beliefs/attitudes

Delimiters were applied in order to minimize the hits on each search. For example, only texts published between the years of 2005 and 2015 were accepted. Additionally, all relevant articles had to be peer-reviewed, something which Eriksson Barajas et al. (2013) describe as a process where at least two unbiased reviewers critically evaluate the content and quality of a study in order to make an informed decision on whether or not it should be published (pp. 61-62). Table 1 below is a summary of the searches conducted, as well as the search words and delimiters used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Search words</th>
<th>Limiters</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Titles Read</th>
<th>Abstracts Read</th>
<th>Full Texts Read</th>
<th>Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LLBA</td>
<td>authentic* AND EFL</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLBA</td>
<td>authentic text* AND EFL</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLBA</td>
<td>authentic texts</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC (Ebsco)</td>
<td>authentic* AND EFL</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed elementary education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric (Ebsco)</td>
<td>authentic texts</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed elementary secondary education</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric (Ebsco)</td>
<td>“English second language” AND teach* method</td>
<td>2005-2015 peer reviewed grade 6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
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</table>
Several factors were weighed before a text could be included in this study. The first requirement was the presence of the word combination “authentic text” or some form thereof in the article. Texts that included these words were then checked for references to English language learning and even teaching methods and teacher/student attitudes, although articles without the latter two references explicitly mentioned were still considered suitable for the study. It was also important to find case studies applicable to upper elementary education, since the focus for the study is on grades 4-6. Limiting a search to various educational levels is possible in the ERIC database, something that simplified somewhat finding applicable texts. Since the LLBA database lacks this feature, it became necessary to read more titles and even full texts in order to determine their relevance. Appendix 1 gives an overview of the relevance of each article chosen for the study based on the above named criteria.

As seen in Table 1, five texts were deemed relevant using the above criteria for inclusion. It is interesting to point out that very few hits were achieved using a combination of the terms “authentic texts” and “EFL”. Instead, the stand-alone phrase “authentic texts” gave more and better hits, possibly because English language learning in any combination was seldom mentioned in the titles or abstracts. Two additional texts were also determined to be relevant upon advice of this author’s thesis advisor. The first is a Swedish text available through Dalarna University and the other is an article that was used as a reference in one of the other approved texts. The title was put into the university’s Summons search engine and downloaded, bringing the total number of approved texts to be analysed to seven.

3.3. Analysis

Eriksson Barajas et al. (2013) write that one reason for systematic reviews is to better understand something, since they often dig deeper into one specific area of a phenomenon. Additionally, such studies are flexible and it is common for the aim and research questions of a study to change during the course of data analysis (pp. 125-126). However, an important first step is to ensure that the data collected is quality data and the authors detail several criteria used to determine a data’s quality. The first criterion is the quality of the overall study. There should be a clear aim and research questions that facilitate the readers’ understanding of the purpose behind the study, as well as a clear background and possible theoretical starting points. The method chosen for data collection is the second criterion and should be clearly stated in the study, along with the ethical considerations that have been taken. The third criterion, the results, are of no less quality and a researcher should be able to show a connection between these and the aim and research questions in a well-written way that does not leave understanding to chance. Finally, the researcher should discuss the possible limitations of his study, as well as the validity and reliability of the results (Eriksson Bajaras et al., 2013, pp. 140-146). A checklist based on these criteria has been applied to each text and the results thereof are presented in Section 4.

The first step in this study was to read the collected data, although some of the material had already been skimmed in order to determine its relevance. A next step was therefore to carefully re-read the data with a focus on interpreting what someone else has written, a phase that Eriksson Barajas et al. (2013) emphasize as the biggest challenge in a systematic literature review, since it is here that the different meanings and possible patterns come to light (pp. 146-147). With the use of a matrix, data collected was analyzed both in reference to each research question and with an emphasis on finding patterns, conflicting views and the different thoughts surrounding these questions. The results are presented later in this study.

3.4 Ethical aspects

All researchers have a responsibility to protect their informants. Therefore, The Swedish Science Council (2002) names four areas that should be taken into consideration when doing research
that involves individuals. These are based on this author’s translation from Swedish and are as follows:

- **Information**: the purpose of the research shall be fully disclosed to all involved
- **Consent**: informants have the right to say no to participation in a research project
- **Confidentiality**: All participants in a research project should be protected in such a way that their identity shall not be disclosed
- **Usage**: All data collected shall not be used for anything other than the research project for which it was intended

(Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, pp. 6-14).

Since this study is a systematic literature review instead of an empirical research project, other considerations should also be taken in the course of this work. For example, The Swedish Research Council’s expert group on ethics (2011) draws attention to the fact that even omissions or skewed results are a form of scientific misconduct and should not occur (Gustafsson, Hermerén, & Pettersson, 2011, pp. 24-25). While it is nearly impossible to determine if the results of the chosen data for this study are skewed or misrepresented, the chosen articles and reports have been vetted for their adherence to the four main principles of ethical conduct.

4. Results

This section presents the articles chosen for this study, as well as the quality assessment done for each. The content of the data is also discussed with an emphasis on the study’s aim and research questions. The three specific areas covered by the research questions, namely, how teachers can work with authentic texts, what the potential benefits are in doing so, and the attitudes and beliefs surrounding the use of authentic texts as a learning tool, are discussed as separate issues in order to lend clarity to this study.

4.1. Presentation of articles

The seven articles chosen as analytical data for this study are listed in no particular order below. A brief description of each is also included.


This article is based on a five-term qualitative study investigating how three upper secondary classroom teachers use authentic texts as a tool to teach EFL with students that speak Caribbean Creole English as their first language. Even though this language is typically classified as a part of the English dialect, the Standard English taught in the classroom is considered a second language.


Cho, Ahn and Krashen’s article pinpoints one specific area sometimes used in conjunction with authentic texts, namely narrow reading, whereby texts written by one specific author are used in language teaching. This study investigates through use of English tests and a questionnaire the effects of narrow reading of the *Clifford* series by Norman Bridwell during a 12-week period with 37 fourth-grade students in a Korean EFL classroom.
3. Illés (2008). What makes a coursebook series stand the test of time?

Students and teachers alike in Hungary love the textbook series *Access to English*, first distributed in 1974 by Oxford University Press. In her article, Illés discusses why this textbook is thought to still be considered an effective language teaching tool in an age when authentic texts have become the preferred norm due, among other things, to their ease of access.


This article discusses the level of situational authenticity found in EFL textbooks in Hong Kong that are marketed as authentic and seen as a way to increase language learners’ communicative skills in English. Three textbooks recommended for use in grades seven through nine have been analyzed and are even considered appropriate for somewhat lower grades.


Day and Ainley delve into the use of literature circles based on authentic texts as a way to teach sixth graders English. There are 22 students involved in this American qualitative study, 12 students learning English as a second language.


Professor Gilmore of the University of Tokyo discusses in this journal article the differences between authentic texts and textbooks and what both can mean for students in the EFL classroom.


The only Swedish study included in this work is Lundberg’s licentiate dissertation in educational work, which looks at the teaching strategies needed to improve English language learning mainly in the earlier grades. She also discusses students in the upper elementary grades and the effects that authentic texts can have on EFL and motivation.

**4.2. Quality assessment**

As already mentioned, Eriksson Bajaras et al. (2013) refer to several criteria as a way to assess the quality of the collected data (pp. 140-146). Therefore, a quality checklist has been created to ensure that the data collected for this study is quality data. The questions comprising the checklist are as follows:

1. Are the aim and research questions clearly stated in the articles?
2. Are there a clear background and/or theoretical starting point?
3. Is the method for data collection clearly stated?
4. Have ethical considerations been taken?
5. Is there a clear connection between the aim and research questions and the results?
6. Is the article easy to read and understand?
7. Does the author discuss limitations of the study?
8. Does the author mention the reliability and validity of the study?
Each article was carefully vetted to guarantee that these eight quality considerations have been taken into account by the author(s) before a final decision was made to include the article in this study. Table 2 shows the results of this author’s quality check.

### Table 2: Quality Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senarinesingh</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day &amp; Ainley</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cho, Ahn &amp; Krashen</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>n/a*</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illés</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lundberg</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Since Chan’s article consists solely of a textbook analysis and no individuals were involved or studied, it is determined that the ethical considerations as stated by The Swedish Science Council are not necessary in this work.

Only two of the seven articles mention reliability and/or validity, one possible reason being that not all of the articles were based on empirical studies. Nonetheless, it was felt necessary to further research what these two terms actually mean in reference to this study. Larsen (2009) defines validity as the relevance of the data collected for analysis and points out that the data should be able to answer the research questions posed. Reliability, on the other hand, means that a study can be repeated by other researchers and that they will arrive at the same results (pp. 40-42). Based on these definitions, a decision has therefore been made that these studies’ clear aim and research questions, clearly stated methods and the results thereof, which are tied to the research questions, serve to validate these studies. Additionally, because the methods used to collect and analyze the data are clearly stated and as such are easily replicable, it is further determined that these studies are reliable.

### 4.3. Content analysis

This section discusses the findings of each text based on the three research questions this study aims to answer. Each research question is discussed separately and begins with a table highlighting the main ideas found in the texts to support understanding of the subsequent discussion.

#### 4.3.1 How can teachers work with authentic texts?

### Table 3: How can teachers work with authentic texts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Method</th>
<th>Seunarinesingh</th>
<th>Cho, Ahn &amp; Krashen</th>
<th>Illés</th>
<th>Chan</th>
<th>Day &amp; Ainley</th>
<th>Gilmore</th>
<th>Lundberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TBLT</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes/Current events/subject integration</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Writing</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-life parallels</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the different ways cited in the articles that teachers can work with authentic texts. Chan (2013) defines task-based language teaching (TBLT) as using tasks in the classroom that connect language learning to real-world use and he names several ways that this can be done. For example, discussing and writing descriptions of photographs, as well as note-taking and writing websites and blogs can be a good way to bring authentic texts into the classroom (pp. 303-312). Additionally, Day and Ainley (2008) use literature circles as a way to incorporate authentic texts with everyday issues such as poverty and racism (p. 161). Lundberg (2007) brings up even more ways that teachers can incorporate EFL tasks with real-life language use, for instance learning the lyrics of a popular song, reading newspaper clippings aloud and guessing the implied message behind newspaper headlines and informational texts (pp. 115-118).

The above-mentioned tasks also show possible ways that authentic texts can be used to work with themes, current events and straddle subject borders when teaching EFL and Seunarinesingh (2010) discusses this in great detail in her text. For example, one teacher uses upcoming weather events to encourage her students to read newspaper articles and do on-line research on different weather phenomena. Another teacher utilizes this same method in her students’ research on floods and their effects on different areas of the world. Both of these teachers link EFL with science and social studies. A third teacher links cultural events to language learning, where students work with various language tasks in conjunction with learning about traditional holidays and celebrations (pp. 46-53).

Projects and themes, however, are not the only way to work with authentic texts. As Gilmore (2007) points out, language learners usually learn that which best suits their own needs. Therefore, in order for authentic texts to be a useful teaching tool, teachers should choose tasks that satisfy their students’ learning needs at the same time as they follow the required language curriculum (pp. 111-113). One way Gilmore mentions this can be done is to vary tasks according to the different learner levels found in the classroom. Teachers can, for example, explain the sometimes difficult words inherent in authentic texts and even rephrase a passage if necessary (Gilmore, 2007, pp. 108-109). In addition to this, Lundberg (2007) writes that teachers can work with the recurring phrases like “once upon a time” and “they lived happily ever after” that are usually found in English storybooks, as well as designate an English corner in the classroom where students can bring in their own books and other authentic English material (pp. 99-103). Literature can be used to introduce students to different literary genres and writing activities can include reports, diaries and summaries based on authentic texts (Illés, 2009, p. 152). Furthermore, narrow reading (books written by one author) of authentic texts gives rise to different activities, including having the students write a reading log or draw a scene based on a chapter in a book (Cho et al., 2005, p. 60). Discussions with the entire class or in smaller groups are also an effective way to use authentic texts in language teaching (Day & Ainley, 2008, pp. 161-162; Lundberg 2007, p. 105; Gilmore, 2007, p. 112; Cho et al., 2005, p. 59).

Nearly all of the authors bring up the importance of using authentic texts to create tasks that draw parallels to the students’ real lives. Gilmore (2007) states that comprehension is increased when a text or task is linked to a language learner’s reality (p. 110), a benefit of authentic texts that Day and Ainley also point out (2008, p. 167). Chan (2013) stresses that language learning tasks need to mirror students’ actual use of English outside of the classroom (p. 312), even though Illés (2009) argues that a textbook can also be an effective learning tool if it turns a fictional world into a reality that students can feel a connection to (p. 149). The same can be said for Cho et al.’s 2005 study where students feel a connection to a series because each book has familiar characters and a familiar setting (p. 58). Additionally, while the need to link language learning to students’ real lives is not explicitly mentioned in Seunarinesingh’s 2010 article, the
teaching methods using current events can be seen as a link between the world of authentic texts and the students’ real lives.

4.3.2 What are the potential benefits of using authentic texts?

Table 4: What are the potential benefits of using authentic texts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Seunarinesingh</th>
<th>Cho, Ahn &amp; Krashe</th>
<th>Illés</th>
<th>Chan</th>
<th>Day &amp; Ainley</th>
<th>Gilmore</th>
<th>Lundberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-world language &amp; culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased understanding, grammar &amp; vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be used for all age groups (sociocultural)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Lundberg (2010), motivation in EFL entails a teacher finding tasks or materials that captures students’ interest to the point that they want to continue learning English (p. 28). Table 4 shows that all of the articles cited in this study state that the use of authentic texts in language teaching is motivating, even if Gilmore (2007) does point out that motivation can be very difficult to measure (p. 107). Nevertheless, authentic texts and story books are seen as meaningful and a motivator for students to learn reading and writing (Seunarinesingh, 2010, p. 41; Day & Ainley, 2008, p. 170; Illés 2009, p. 146; Lundberg, 2007, p. 93; Cho et al., 2005, p. 59). Additionally, the three textbooks analyzed by Chan (2013) with their authentic language and tasks around these were also found to be motivating (p. 310).

One possible reason for this is that authentic texts mirror the real world and can provide a language base for both conversation and travel, as highlighted by Chan (2013, pp. 303-315). Additionally, students see the language used in authentic texts as a way to help them understand the huge amount of English they are exposed to every day outside of the classroom (Lundberg, 2007, p. 177) and by using strategies such as guessing, they can gain the confidence necessary to use the language in unknown situations (Lundberg, 2007, pp. 118-119). Cho et al. (2005) agree that authentic texts help students develop confidence when using English (p. 61) and as an added bonus, even cultural references can be found within these texts. This can be seen as a way to put non-native English speakers on the same level as their native-speaking peers (Illés, 2009, p. 149).

Authentic texts also help to develop students’ vocabulary and grammar (Senarinesingh, 2010, p. 53; Gilmore, 2007, p. 111), mainly due to the natural dialogs found in these texts (Illés, 2009, p. 148). Understanding an overall context of a story is also important and this is something more easily achieved with authentic texts, since students can follow the story without understanding every single word (Gilmore, 2007, p. 109; Illés, 2009, p. 149). Additionally, when authentic texts are used for literary discussions, not only do the students learn to read and speak English at a faster pace, they also become acquainted with the various parts of a literary work, such as characters and plots (Day & Ainley, 2008, pp. 163-164).
Gilmore (2007) points out that another important benefit realised through the use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom is the teachers’ freedom to choose texts that best meet the specific needs of the learners. He stresses that even students seem to recognize that authentic texts can help them bridge the gap between what they already know and what they need to know in order to continue to improve in the EFL classroom, a language learning method referred to as noticing (pp. 107-111). Furthermore, the use of authentic texts in EFL provides sociocultural benefits, especially in mixed age groups where older students can help younger ones (Lundberg, 2007, p. 124). In line with this, Day and Ainley (2008) point out that discussions around authentic texts can lead students to social growth, where they become resources for each other (pp. 165-169). As an added bonus, authentic texts are also considered suitable for all grade levels (Cho et al., 2005, p. 62).

### 4.3.3 Attitudes and beliefs found in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Seunarinesingh</th>
<th>Cho, Ahn &amp; Krashe</th>
<th>Illés</th>
<th>Chan</th>
<th>Day &amp; Ainley</th>
<th>Gilmore</th>
<th>Lundberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time consuming</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 5, teacher attitudes and/or beliefs about the use of authentic texts in EFL vary somewhat between the articles, with Cho et al. (2005) and Illés (2009) making no reference to this at all. Skepticism was something felt by the teachers in the beginning of Day and Ainley’s (2008) study on literature circles, based on the belief that these texts are simply too hard for some students (p. 172), an opinion also expressed in Chan’s study (2013, p. 304). Additionally, some teachers think that searching for authentic texts and planning lessons around these is too time-consuming (Gilmore, 2007, p. 108). The teachers in Lundberg’s (2007) study echo this sentiment and point out that most teachers do not have time to plan lessons other than those found in textbooks (p. 86). However, they do admit that the extra planning involved is worth the effort when they see the students’ excitement and motivation grow when learning EFL, which in its turn increases the positive feelings towards their own profession (Lundberg, 2007, pp. 128-130). This change in attitude can also be found in Day and Ainley (2008), when the teacher expresses both surprise and happiness that the students could do so much more than she had given them credit for. She underscores that she is now a firm believer in the benefits of using authentic texts and literature circles in EFL (pp. 172-173).

The teachers in Seunarinesingh’s (2010) study are also of the opinion that choosing authentic texts is too time-consuming, although one teacher does think that there should be a balance between authenticity and the pre-determined curriculum for each term. The author points out that most teachers want to find methods that inspire their students to learn EFL, but it is often easier to follow the core curriculum as set-out in the English syllabus through the use of textbooks. However, spontaneous lessons based on current events can be an occasional way to work around this (2010, pp. 54-55).
Table 6: Student attitudes about the use of authentic texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Seunarinesingh</th>
<th>Cho, Ahn &amp; Krashe</th>
<th>Illés</th>
<th>Chan</th>
<th>Day &amp; Ainle</th>
<th>Gilmore</th>
<th>Lundberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating/fun</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less enthusiastic</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A common belief is that students do not like to learn a language solely from textbooks (Lundberg, 2007, p. 85) and some teachers have found that authentic texts are better at holding students’ interest when learning EFL (Lundberg, 2007, p. 120). However, other students find authentic texts less interesting than textbooks (Gilmore, 2007, p. 108). For example, the students that typically receive high grades when learning EFL from a textbook are less likely to want to try something new (Lundberg, 2007, p. 138). Even the students in Illés’ (2009) study say they are happy to continue learning EFL from the textbook *Access to English* (p. 145).

On the other hand, many students indicate that it is fun to read authentic texts (Day & Ainley, 2008, p. 173; Cho et al., 2005, p. 61). As some students state after authentic literature is introduced in the EFL classroom, they never knew that learning English could be so much fun (Lundberg, 2007, p. 126). The students in Cho et al.’s 2005 study on narrow reading share this enthusiasm, as well as express excitement that they can learn more new words by reading stories in the *Clifford* series (p. 62). While Seunarinesingh’s (2010) study does not make a direct reference to student attitudes, one observation is that student participation increased during class discussions around authentic texts, something that can be seen as an indicator that students find such texts motivating and/or fun (pp. 46-47). As seen in Table 6, Chan’s (2013) study makes no reference to either teacher or student attitudes and/or beliefs about the use of authentic texts in EFL.

5. Discussion
This section discusses the main finding of this study, along with its limitations, as well as possible ways to continue researching in this area.

5.1. Method findings
The aim of this study has been to examine what prior research says about the use of authentic texts in the EFL upper elementary classroom. The research questions tied to this aim were as follows:

1. How can teachers work with authentic texts?
2. What are the potential benefits of using authentic texts?
3. What are teachers’ and students’ attitudes and/or beliefs about the use of authentic texts?

It should first be noted that it was not entirely easy to find prior research linking the use of authentic texts in EFL with students in the upper elementary classroom. One reason for this is that many studies focus on adult learners. Additionally, only studies conducted between 2005 and 2015 were accepted. Furthermore, only one Swedish study was found and it was aimed more towards learners in the lower elementary EFL classroom. However, it did contain some references to students in the upper elementary grades and seemed worthwhile to include in this study, especially considering the fact that some of the conclusions reached can be applied to all grade levels.
5.2. Main findings
The Agency for Education (2011) has tasked Swedish teachers with helping their students develop an ability to understand and interpret English, as well as to learn to use the language as an effective communication tool. Additionally, students must learn to use strategies to understand others, make themselves understood and adapt their use of English dependent upon the context and recipient (Skolverket, 2011, p. 32). Authentic texts can be seen as an effective way for teachers to help their students accomplish these goals, a theory that the articles analyzed in this study have proven. Crossley et al.’s (2007) emphasis on authentic texts as an important tool from a communicative pedagogy standpoint (pp. 15-17) is also applicable in this instance.

There are many different ways that teachers can work with authentic texts and, as Gilmore (2007) states, teachers can choose tasks that best suit their students’ learning needs and adjust them to correspond with the English curriculum (pp. 111-113). Chan (2013) defines text-based language learning (TBLT) as a way to connect authentic texts with real-life language use (p. 303) and several authors mention tasks such as writing websites and blogs, reading authentic literature and even learning the lyrics to popular songs as an effective way to work with authentic texts (Lundberg, 2007; Cho et al., 2005; Day & Ainley, 2008). Additionally, one teacher in Seunarinesingh’s 2010 study uses current events in the form of weather and flooding phenomena as a way to incorporate EFL and authentic texts to other subjects.

Narrow reading is a term brought up by Cho et al. (2005) as a way to work with authentic texts written only by one author, and, according to them, can lend itself to activities including reading logs and drawing pictures that show the comprehension gained from a text (pp. 59-60). This can be an especially effective teaching tool in light of the question of whether authentic texts are too difficult for some pupils. Pinter (2006) points out that children do not need to understand every word in order to learn from an authentic text (p. 124) and this seems especially relevant in conjunction with narrow reading. Because students are continuously exposed to works by the same author, they become accustomed to the writing style and the terminology used, which can aid in an overall understanding of a story even if some words are unfamiliar. Class discussions are also a way to ensure that most students understand a text and are thus an effective way to work with authentic texts, as evidenced in Day and Ainley’s (2008) trial using literary discussions based on authentic literature as a way for students to make gains in EFL.

Interestingly enough, the two studies that compared textbooks consisting of authentic texts found that textbook exercises that mimic real-life conversations and situations can be as effective as an actual authentic text. Illés (2009) and Chan (2013) highlight the importance of students feeling a connection with the English language used outside of the classroom, an aspect Badger and MacDonald (2010) also emphasize as important if teachers want to regain power in the push towards an authentic language classroom (p. 581). This study has shown that there are textbooks written that mimic real-life language situations and as such are effective teaching tools. These can possibly be seen as a way to narrow the gap between those that advocate textbook teaching and those that call for the use of authentic texts in language learning. As Tyberg (2010) states, it is a shame that EFL teaching has become divided regarding these two methods and the ideal is that teachers find a way to combine the two (pp. 54-58).

Motivation can possibly be seen as one of the most important benefits of using authentic texts in language teaching and is something that all of the studies agree upon, even if Gilmore (2007) points out that motivation is hard to measure (p. 107). One reason for this is that authentic texts mirror the real world where communication is key and both Chan (2013) and Lundberg (2007) underscore that the language used in authentic texts helps students understand the English they
see and hear outside of the classroom. Illés (2009) points out that culture can also be learned through the use of authentic texts (p. 149). Vygotsky’s activity theory, where students decide themselves whether or not to engage in activities based on their own motives for learning a language (Lantolf, 2000, pp. 8-13), and Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, where language learning can pave the way to one’s ideal self (pp. 3-4), come into play here. Students are motivated to learn English because they feel a connection to English speakers and to the cultures where English is the main language spoken. This goes hand-in-hand with Vygotsky’s ideas on the zone of proximal development and the gains that can be made through the support of others (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17), in this case native English speakers. Today’s students strive to imitate what they hear on-line or on television, which can also be seen as a possible way to reach one’s ideal self.

Other benefits brought about through the use of authentic texts include improved reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary, all of which can be attributed to the natural dialogs found in authentic texts (Illés, 2009, pp 146-148). Additionally, authentic texts provide an opportunity for students to gain a basic understanding of a text without having to know every word (Gilmore, 2007, p. 109), which is a point Pinter (2006) also makes (p. 124). Additional sociocultural benefits other than the ones named above are also recognized, especially when older students help younger ones or students stronger in EFL are paired with those than need more support (Lundberg, 2007, p. 124). Using this method, students become resources for each other (Day & Ainley, 2008, pp. 165-169).

While the authors studied did not focus the bulk of their research on teacher and student attitudes and beliefs, there were some references to this area in their research. For example, many teachers in Gilmore’s (2007) and Lundberg’s (2007) studies found working with authentic texts too time-consuming, mainly due to both having to find appropriate texts and to plan lessons around them. However, as Lundberg (2007) points out, some teachers feel that the extra time needed is worth it when they see how their students respond to authentic texts (pp. 128-130). Other teachers think that authentic texts are too difficult for their students (Day & Ainley, 2008; Chan 2013), a belief Pinter (2006, p. 120) also brings up, even if this theory was disproved to a certain extent by the students themselves in Day and Ainley’s study. Nonetheless, one researcher feels that even with the benefits gained using authentic texts, it is somewhat necessary to stick to at least partial textbook teaching in order to be able to follow the English syllabus (Seunarinesingh, 2010, p. 53). This sentiment is shared by the teachers interviewed in the Agency for Education’s study, where textbooks were seen as the most effective way to ensure that as many students as possible reach the educational goals laid out in the curriculum (Skolverket, 2006, p. 11).

One common attitude held by many students is that it is fun to learn English by reading authentic texts (Day & Ainley, 2008; Cho et al., 2005; Lundberg, 2007). Even Cho et al.’s 2005 study on narrow reading describes students who think that reading authentic literature is fun, and it helps them learn new words. However, this does not hold true for all students, as both Gilmore (2007) and Lundberg (2007) point out, especially those who already make high grades through textbook teaching. Additionally, Illés (2009) and Chan (2013) make a strong case for textbooks in their studies, especially those that mimic authentic texts and thus connect students to real-world English.

5.3. Limitations
This study aimed primarily to answer research questions based on the use of authentic texts in the Swedish EFL classroom. However, due to the limited number of relevant journal articles and empirical studies in this area, it is impossible to draw any real conclusions on the use of authentic
texts when teaching EFL in Sweden. Additionally, the search words entered into the various databases resulted in only five relevant articles for this study. Other search words, word combinations and even other databases could have resulted in more and different articles being used as data and could have led to different results. Furthermore, only texts published between 2005 and 2015 were accepted upon advice by Dalarna University, even though there seems to be an abundance of available material related to authentic texts written earlier than 2005. The use of some of these articles could also have given different results than the ones stated. It should also be noted that not all articles specifically target the upper elementary classroom.

The search words “authentic texts” were used to ensure that hits were made on this specific teaching method. Thus, the chosen texts display authentic texts in combination with EFL in a favorable light as compared with simplified texts. However, it is entirely possible that a search with the words “simplified texts” would have resulted in hits showing this teaching method as the most favorable.

Time has also been a factor in this work and has limited this author’s search for relevant data. It would have been beneficial, for example, to have had more time to read additional texts in order to make a better informed decision on whether the articles chosen were actually the most relevant for this study. What is more, each article was only read twice, once relatively quickly and then again more carefully with a focus on the aim and research questions stated for this work. A third and even fourth reading could have been beneficial and served to facilitate further interpretation and understanding of the articles analyzed, but this was not possible due to the lack of time.

The quality of these chosen articles has been assessed based on literature relevant to this thesis course. While these assessment areas can certainly be trusted, the actual assessment is entirely that of this author. Others could have come to completely different conclusions, something that can also be said of the actual data analysis work and the results drawn thereof.

5.4. Further research needed
The findings of this study are mainly focused on areas outside of Sweden, for example, Asia, the Caribbean and a small part of the United States. While Lundberg’s study does give some indication about the use of and attitudes associated with authentic texts in the Swedish classroom, it would be especially interesting to conduct an empirical study in this area.

The theoretical background discussed in the data collected consists largely of Vygotsky’s theory on culturally motivated activities and the zone of proximal development (ZPD), pointing toward what someone can accomplish with support from others (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). In fact, several researchers analyzed in this thesis see ZPD as helpful in understanding some of the motivators behind EFL in conjunction with authentic texts. Because motivation was also named as a major contributing factor to language learning, Dörnyei and Ushioda’s L2 Motivational Self System has also been researched and briefly discussed. This author has personally witnessed the excitement some students in an upper elementary EFL classroom have shown when exposed to authentic texts. Many ask to read more books and one student even came with suggestions on books he thought would be fun to read in class. Because of these experiences, it can be safely said that in this one classroom many students were motivated to continue learning English. Therefore, further exploration of these two theories in conjunction with EFL in an upper elementary Swedish classroom is considered exciting and beneficial.

6. Conclusion
This thesis has aimed to answer research questions pertaining to the use of authentic texts in the EFL classroom, namely how teachers can work with these texts, what the potential benefits are,
and the teacher and student attitudes and/or beliefs regarding the use of these in language learning. Based on the articles analyzed, authentic texts not only have a place in the language classroom, but are also thought to be of great benefit. Teachers can work with these in a variety of ways, using reading circles, classroom discussions, narrow reading and even projects and themes that expose students not only to authentic language use, but also to the different cultures where the English language is spoken. Additionally, most students find authentic texts fun and motivating. Despite this, many teachers continue to restrict their teaching to the use of textbooks. One reason stated for this is the time needed to find appropriate authentic texts and plan lessons around these. What is more, many teachers underestimate their students’ abilities and think that authentic texts are too difficult. Therefore, textbooks continue to be seen by many teachers as the best way for students to reach the English-learning goals as laid out by each country’s education agency.

This is something that this author has witnessed both during her times student teaching in one upper elementary classroom, as well as during her years working at a secondary school for students with special needs. These students want to read and speak “real” English, but are given few, if any, opportunities. This study has highlighted that even if it is not realistic to completely stop using textbooks, there is a need for teaching diversity in the EFL classroom. Textbook teaching alone is not enough if teachers want to inspire their students to continue learning English. As Pinter (2006) points out, students around the age of eleven or twelve begin to see English as important for their future goals and teachers have a responsibility to provide activities that continue to motivate older language learners (p. 37). English surrounds most of us in every aspect of our lives. It is this author’s opinion that teachers should take advantage of the vast amount of authentic English texts available in all of their forms and create a classroom where language learning is not only seen as a way to reach the educational goals as set out in a syllabus, but also as a way to have fun while conquering the English-speaking world. As Badger and MacDonald (2010) remind us, what happens outside of the classroom does not have to be superior to what happens inside (p. 579). The choice is ours.
Bibliography


Vetenskapsrådet, Stockholm.

**Appendix 1. Relevance assessment overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Are authentic texts named in the text?</th>
<th>Is ELT named in the text?</th>
<th>Are teacher/student attitudes and/or beliefs represented in the text?</th>
<th>Does the text refer to students in the upper elementary grades?</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gilmore</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

* These works discuss the use of authentic texts and textbooks in general; therefore, the results are applicable for all ages and educational levels.

**Illés’ article discusses the textbook *Access to English*, which is included in the Hungarian English curriculum for grades 7-9. However, since this textbook could even be used in somewhat lower grades, this text was deemed appropriate for this study.